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SERMONS,

BY

SAMUEL HORSLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. F.A.S.

LATE

LORD BISHOP OF ST ASAPH.

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SAMUEL HORSLEY,

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SERMON XV.

2 PETER, i. 20, 21.

"*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time*"—or, as it is in the margin, "*came not at any time*"—"*by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*"

IN the verse which immediately precedes my text, the apostle mentions a "sure word of prophecy," which he earnestly commends to the attention of the faithful. This word of prophecy, I conceive, is to be understood, not of that particular word of the psalmist,* nor of that other of Isaiah,† to which the voice

* Psalm ii. 7. † Isaiah, xlii. 1.

uttered from heaven at the baptism, and repeated from the *shechinah* at the transfiguration, hath by many been supposed to allude;—not of either of these, nor of any other particular prediction, is St Peter's prophetic word, in my judgment, to be understood; but of the entire volume of the prophetic writings—of the whole body of the prophecies which were extant in the Christian church, at the time when the apostle wrote this second epistle. You are all, I doubt not, too well acquainted with your Bibles, to be told by me, that this epistle was written at no long interval of time before the blessed apostle's martyrdom. He tells you so himself, in the fourteenth verse of this first chapter. The near prospect of putting off his mortal tabernacle, was the occasion of his composing this epistle, which is to be considered as his dying charge to the church of God. Now, the martyrdom of St Peter took place in Nero's persecution, when his fellow-labourer St Paul had been already taken off. St Paul, therefore, we may reasonably suppose, was

dead before St Peter wrote this epistle, which, by necessary consequence, must have been of later date than any of St Paul's. Again, three of the four gospels, St Matthew's, St Mark's, and St Luke's, were all published some years before St Peter's death; for St Luke's, which is beyond all controversy the latest of the three, was written about the time when St Paul was released from his first imprisonment at Rome. It appears from these circumstances, that our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and his last advent, which is recited in the gospels of the three first evangelists, and St Paul's predictions of Antichrist, the dreadful corruptions of the latter times, and the final restoration of the Jewish people, delivered in various parts of his epistles, must have been current among Christians at the time when this second epistle of St Peter was composed. These prophecies, therefore, of the Christian church, together with the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, the books of the Jewish prophets, the book of Psalms, and the more ancient

oracles preserved in the books of Moses, make up that system of prophecy which is called by the apostle "the prophetic word," to which, as it were, with his last breath, he gives it in charge to the true believer to give heed. If I seem to exclude the book of the Apocalypse from that body of prophecy which I suppose the apostle's injunction to regard, it is not that I entertain the least doubt about the authenticity or authority of that book, or that I esteem it less deserving of attention than the rest of the prophetic writings; but for this reason, that, not being written till many years after St Peter's death, it cannot be understood to make a part of the writings to which *he* alludes. However, since the sentiments delivered by St Peter are to be understood to be the mind of the Holy Spirit which inspired him,—since the injunction is general, prescribing what is the duty of Christians in all ages, no less than of those who were the contemporaries of the apostle,—since the Apocalypse, though not then written, was nevertheless an object of the

Spirit's prescience, as a book which, in no distant time, was to become a part of the oracular code, we will, if you please, amend our exposition of the apostle's phrase: we will include the Apocalypse in the word of prophecy; and we will say that the whole body of the prophecies, contained in the inspired books of the Old and New Testament, is that to which the Holy Spirit, in the admonition which he dictated to St Peter, requires all who look for salvation to give heed, "as to a lamp shining in a dark place;"—a discovery from heaven of the schemes of Providence, which, however imperfect, is yet sufficient for the comfort and support of good men, under all the discouragements of the present life; as it furnishes a demonstration—not of equal evidence, indeed, with that which the final catastrophe will afford; but a certain demonstration—a demonstration drawn from fact and experience, rising in evidence as the ages of the world roll on, and, in every stage of it, sufficient for the

passing generation of mankind, "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of the earth,"—that his providence directeth all events for the final happiness of the virtuous,—that "there is a reward for the righteous,—that there is a God who will judge the earth." In all the great events of the world, especially in those which more immediately concern the true religion and the church, the first Christians saw, and we of these ages see, the extended arm of Providence by the lamp of the prophetic word, which justly therefore claims the heedful attention of every Christian, in every age, "till the morning dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts,"—till the destined period shall arrive, for that clearer knowledge of the Almighty, and of his ways, which seems to be promised to the last ages of the church, and will terminate in that full understanding of the justice, equity, and mercy of God's dealings with mankind, which will make a chief part of the happiness of the righteous in the

future life, and seems to be described in Scripture under the strong metaphor of seeing the incorporeal God.

This is the sum of the verse which precedes my text. It is an earnest exhortation to all Christians to give attention to the prophecies of holy writ, as what will best obviate all doubts that might shake their faith, and prevent their minds from being unsettled by those difficulties which the evil heart of unbelief will ever find in the present moral constitution, according to those imperfect views of it which the light of nature by itself affords.

But to what purpose shall we give attention to prophecy, unless we may hope to understand it? And where is the Christian who is not ready to say, with the treasurer of the Ethiopian queen, "How can I understand, except some man shall guide me?" The Ethiopian found a man appointed and impowered to guide him: but in these days, when the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are withholden, where is the man who hath the authority or the ability to be

another's guide?—Truly, vain is the help of man, whose breath is in his nostrils; but, blessed be God, he hath not left us without aid. Our help is in the name of the Lord. To his exhortation to the study of prophecy, the inspired apostle, apprized of our necessities, hath, in the first of the two verses which I have chosen for my text, annexed an infallible rule to guide plain men in the interpretation of prophecy; and in the latter verse, he explains upon what principle this rule is founded.

Observe me: I say the apostle gives you an infallible *rule* of interpretation. I do not tell you that he refers you to any infallible interpreter; which perverse meaning, the divines of the church of Rome, for purposes which I forbear to mention, have endeavoured to fasten upon this text. The claim of infallibility, or even of authority to prescribe magisterjally to the opinions and the consciences of men, whether in an individual or in assemblies and collections of men, is never to be admitted. Admitted, said I?—it is not to be heard with pa-

tience, unless it be supported by a miracle: and this very text of Scripture is manifestly, of all others, the most adverse to the arrogant pretensions of the Roman pontiff. Had it been the intention of God, that Christians, after the death of the apostles, should take the sense of Scripture, in all obscure and doubtful passages, from the mouth of an infallible interpreter, whose decisions, in all points of doctrine, faith, and practice, should be oracular and final, *this* was the occasion for the apostle to have mentioned it—to have told us plainly whither we should resort for the unerring explication of those prophecies, which, it seems, so well deserve to be studied and understood. And from St Peter, in particular, of all the apostles, this information was in all reason to be expected, if, as the vain tradition goes, the oracular gift was to be lodged with his successors. This, too, was the time when the mention of the thing was most likely to occur to the apostle's thoughts; when he was about to be removed from the superintendence of the

church, and was composing an epistle for the direction of the flock which he so faithfully had fed, after his departure. Yet St Peter, at this critical season, when his mind was filled with an interested care for the welfare of the church after his decease, upon an occasion which might naturally lead him to mention all means of instruction that were likely to be provided,—in these circumstances, St Peter gives not the most distant intimation of a living oracle to be perpetually maintained in the succession of the Roman bishops. On the contrary, he overthrows their aspiring claims, by doing that which supersedes the supposed necessity of any such institution: he lays down a plain rule, which, judiciously applied, may enable every private Christian to interpret the written oracles of prophecy, in all points of general importance, for himself.

The rule is contained in this maxim, which the apostle propounds as a leading principle, of which, in reading the prophecies, we never should lose sight, "That no prophecy of Scrip-

ture is of any *private interpretation.*" "Knowing this first," says he, "that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any *private interpretation.*" And the reason is this,—that the predictions of the prophets did not, like their own private thoughts and sentiments, originate in their own minds. The prophets, in the exercise of their office, were necessary agents, acting under the irresistible impulse of the Omniscient Spirit, who made the faculties and the organs of those holy men his own instruments for conveying to mankind some portion of the treasures of his own knowledge. Futurity seems to have been delineated in some sort of emblematical picture, presented by the Spirit of God to the prophet's mind, which, preternaturally filled and heated with this scenery, in describing the images obtruded on the phantasy, gave pathetic utterance to wisdom not its own. "For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Some one, perhaps, will be apt to say, "It had been well if the apostle had delivered his rule for the explication of prophecy, as clearly as he hath expressed what he allegeth as the principle from which his rule is derived. This principle is indeed propounded with the utmost perspicuity: but how this principle leads to the maxim which is drawn from it, or what the true sense of that maxim may be, or how it may be applied as a rule of interpretation, may not appear so obvious. It may seem that the apostle hath rather told us negatively how the prophecies *may not*, than affirmatively how they *may be* interpreted: and since, in most cases, error is infinite, and truth single, it may be presumed that innumerable modes of interpretation will mislead, while one only will carry us to the true sense of the prophecies; and surely it had been more to the purpose, to point out that single true path, than to guard us against one out of a great number of deviations. Nor, it may be said, is this erroneous path, which we are admonished to avoid,

very intelligibly defined. Private interpretation, it seems, is that which is never to be applied. But what is private interpretation? Is it the interpretation of the private Christian? Is it forbidden that any private member of the church should endeavour to ascertain the sense of any text of prophecy for himself?—The prohibition would imply, that there must be somewhere, either in some great officer of the church, or in assemblies of her presbyters and bishops, an authority of public interpretation, —of which the contrary seems to have been proved from this very passage."

It must be confessed, that all this obscurity and incoherence appears in the first face of the passage, as it is expressed in our English Bibles. The truth is, that the English word *private* does but very darkly, if at all, convey to the understanding of the English reader the original word to which it is meant that it should answer. The original word denotes that peculiar appropriation of the thing with which it is joined, to something else previously men-

tioned, which is expressed in English by the word *own* subjoined to the pronouns of possession: *Our own* power—*his own* blood—a prophet of *their own*. In all these places, the Greek word which is rendered by the words *our own—his own—their own*, is that same word which in this text is rendered by the word *private*. The precise meaning, therefore, of the original, may be thus expressed: "Not any prophecy of Scripture is of *self-interpretation*." This compound word, "self-interpretation," contains the exact and full meaning of the two Greek words which our translators have rendered by "private interpretation," and with which no two separate words can be found in our language exactly to correspond. The meaning is just the same as might be thus expressed: "Not any prophecy of Scripture is its own interpreter." It is in this sense that the passage is rendered in the French Bible of the church of Geneva; and, what is of much importance to observe, it is so rendered in the Latin translation called the Vulgate, which the

church of Rome upholds as the unerring standard of the sacred text.

This, then, is the rule of interpretation prescribed by the apostle, in my text: and though it is propounded in a negative form, and may therefore seem only to exclude an improper method of interpretation, it contains, as I shall presently explain to you, a very clear and positive definition of the only method to be used with any certainty of success.

The maxim is to be applied, both to every single text of prophecy, and to the whole.

Of any single text of prophecy, it is true that it cannot be its own interpreter; for this reason,—because the Scripture prophecies are not detached predictions of separate independent events, but are united in a regular and entire system, all terminating in one great object—the promulgation of the gospel, and the complete establishment of the Messiah's kingdom. Of this system, every particular prophecy makes a part, and bears a more immediate or a more remote relation to that which is the ob-

ject of the whole. It is therefore very unlikely, that the true signification of any particular text of prophecy should be discovered from the bare attention to the terms of the single prediction, taken by itself, without considering it as a part of that system to which it unquestionably belongs, and without observing how it may stand connected with earlier and later prophecies, especially with those which might more immediately precede or more immediately follow it.

Again, of the whole of the Scripture prophecies, it is true that it cannot be its own interpreter. Its meaning never can be discovered, without a general knowledge of the principal events to which it alludes; for prophecy was not given to enable curious men to pry into futurity, but to enable the serious and considerate to discern in past events the hand of Providence.

Thus you see, the apostle, while he seems only to guard against a manner of interpretation which would perpetually mislead, in effect

directs us to that which will seldom fail. Every particular prophecy is to be referred to the system, and to be understood in that sense which may most aptly connect it with the whole; and the sense of prophecy in general is to be sought in the events which have actually taken place,—the history of mankind, especially in the article of their religious improvement, being the public infallible interpreter of the oracles of God.

I shall now proceed, in this, and some other discourses, to explain these rules somewhat more distinctly,—to illustrate the use of them by examples of their application,—and to show you how naturally they arise out of that principle which is alleged by the apostle as their foundation, and how utterly they overthrow the most formidable objection that the adversaries of our holy faith have ever been able to produce against that particular evidence of our Lord's pretensions which the completion of the Scripture prophecies affords.

In the first place, for the more distinct explication of the apostle's maxim, nothing, I conceive, is requisite, but to mark the limits within which the meaning of it is to be restrained.

And, first, the subject of the apostle's negative proposition, *prophecy*.—Under this name is not to be included every thing that might be uttered by a prophet, even under the Divine impulse; but the word is to be taken strictly for that which was the highest part of the prophetic office—the prediction of the events of distant ages. The prophets spake under the influence of the Spirit, upon various occasions, when they had no such predictions to deliver. They were, in the Jewish church, the ordinary preachers of righteousness; and their lessons of morality and religion, though often conveyed in the figured strains of poetry, were abundantly perspicuous. They were occasionally sent to advise public measures, in certain critical situations of the Jewish state. Sometimes they gave warning of impending judge-

events, or notice of approaching mercies; and sometimes they were employed to rebuke the vices and to declare the destiny of individuals. What they had to utter upon these occasions had sometimes, perhaps, no immediate connexion with prophecy, properly so called; and the mind of the prophet seems to have been very differently affected with these subjects, and with the visions of futurity. The council he was to give, or the event he was to announce, were presented naked, without the disguise of imagery, to his thoughts, and he gave it utterance in perspicuous phrases, that carried a definite and obvious meaning. There are even predictions, and those of very remote events, and those events of the highest moment, which are not properly to be called prophecies. Such are those declarations of the future conditions of the righteous and the wicked, which make a principal branch of general revelation, and are propounded in such clear terms, that none can be at a loss to apprehend the general purport of them. These are, indeed, predictions,

because the events which they declare are future; yet they do not seem to answer to the notion of prophecy, in the general acceptation of the word. What then, you will ask me, is the distinction between these discoveries of general revelation and prophecy, properly so called?—The distinction, I think, is this: An explicit declaration of the final general event of things, and of whatever else may be the immediate effect of the will and power of the First Cause, or the purport of any original decree of God, is revelation. Prophecy is a disguised detail of those intermediate and subordinate events which are brought about by the regular operation of second causes, and are in part dependent upon man's free agency. Predictions of these events are prophecies, in the proper meaning of the word; and, of these prophecies alone, St Peter's maxim, "that no prophecy is its own interpreter," is to be understood.

Again, the word "interpretation" is not to be understood without much restriction. Inter-

pretation, in the largest sense, consists of various branches, the greater part of which it were absurd to include in the negation of the text. Such are all grammatical interpretations of an author's language, and logical elucidations of the scope, composition, and coherence of his argument. Such interpretations may be necessary for prophecies, in common with every other kind of writings; and the general rules by which they must proceed are the same in all: but the interpretation of which the apostle speaks is that which is peculiar to prophecy; and it consists in ascertaining the events to which predictions allude, and in showing the agreement between the images of the prediction, and the particulars of the history; and this particular sort of interpretation, distinct from any other, is expressed by that word which we find in this place in the original text of the apostle. The original word hath not the extensive signification of the English word "interpretation," but it is the specific name of

that sort of exposition which renders the mystic sense of parables, dreams, and prophecies.

Having thus defined in what sense the apostle uses the word "prophecies," and what that particular sort of interpretation is, which, he says, no prophecy can furnish for itself, his maxim is reduced to a perspicuous proposition, too evident to need farther proof or explication. Of prophecies, in the strict acceptation of the word,—that is, of disguised predictions of those events which are brought about by the intervention of second causes, and do in great part depend upon the free agency of man, —of such predictions, the apostle affirms that the mystic interpretation—that interpretation which consists in ascertaining the events with which the predictions correspond—is never to be drawn from the prophecy itself. It is not to be struck out by any process of criticism applied to the words in which a prediction is conceived;—it is not to be so struck out, because, without a knowledge of the event foretold, as well as a right understanding of the

terms of the prediction, the agreement between them cannot be perceived. And, among different events which may sometimes seem prefigured by the same prophetic images, those are always to be esteemed the true completions, which, being most connected with the main object of prophecy, may most aptly connect any particular prediction with the system.

It is of importance, however, that I show you, that the apostle's maxim, in the sense in which I would teach you to understand it, arises naturally from the principle which he alleges as the foundation of it,—that the origin of prophecy, its coming from God, is a reason why it should not be capable of self-interpretation: for, if I should not be able to make out this connexion, you would do wisely to reject the whole of my interpretation; since it is by infinite degrees more credible that error should be in my exposition, than incoherence in the apostle's discourse.

But the connexion, if I mistake not, is not difficult to be made out: for, since the pro-

pieces, though delivered by various persons, were dictated to all by one and the same Omniscient Spirit, the different books, and the scattered passages of prophecy, are not to be considered as the works or the sayings of different men, treating a variety of subjects, or delivering various and contradictory opinions upon the same subject; but as parts of an entire work of a single author—of an author, who, having a perfect comprehension of the subject which he treats, and at all times equally enjoying the perfection of his intellect, cannot but be always in harmony with himself. We find, in the writings of a man of any depth of understanding, such relation and connexion of the parts of any entire work—such order and continuity of the thoughts—such consequence and concatenation of arguments,—in a word, such unity of the whole, which, at the same time that it gives perspicuity to every part, when its relation to the whole is known, will render it difficult, and in many cases impossible, to discover the sense

of any single period, taken at a venture from the first place where the book may chance to open, without any general apprehension of the subject, or of the scope of the particular argument to which the sentence may belong. How much more perfect, is it reasonable to believe, must be the harmony and concert of parts—how much closer the union of the thoughts—how much more orderly the arrangement—how much less unbroken the consequence of argument, in a work which hath for its real author that Omniscient Mind to which the universe is ever present, in one unvaried undivided thought! —the universe, I say,—that is, the entire comprehension of the visible and intelligible world, with its ineffable variety of mortal and immortal natures—of substances, accidents, qualities, relations, present, past and future!—that Mind, in which all science, truth, and knowledge, is summed and compacted in one vast idea! How absurd were the imagination, that harmony and system, while they reign in the

works of men, are not to be looked for in the instruction which this great Mind hath delivered, in separate parcels indeed, by the different instruments which it hath at different times employed; or that any detached part of his sacred volume may be safely expounded, without reference to the whole!—The Divine knowledge is indeed too excellent for man, and could not otherwise be imparted to him than in scraps and fragments: but these are then only understood, when the human mind, by just and dextrous combinations, is able to restore them, in some imperfect degree, to the shadow and the semblance at least of that simplicity and unity in which all truth originally exists in the self-furnished intellect of God.

But, farther. As there cannot but be harmony and connexion in the knowledge and the thoughts of God, so there cannot but be unity and consistency of design in all his communications with mankind. The end, indeed, of all that extraordinary intercourse which the great

God who made heaven and earth hath vouchsafed to hold with the inhabitants of this lower world, is the moral improvement of the human character—the improvement of man's heart and understanding, by the establishment and propagation of the Christian religion. All instruction from heaven, of which the prophecies make a part, is directed to this end. All the promises given to the patriarchs—the whole typical service of the law—the succession of the Jewish prophets,—all these things were means employed by God to prepare the world for the revelation of his Son; and the later prophecies of our Lord himself, and his inspired apostles, are still means of the same kind for the farther advancement of the same great design,—to spread that divine teacher's doctrine, and to give it full effect upon the hearts of the faithful. The great object, therefore, of the whole word of prophecy, is the Messiah and his kingdom; and it divides itself into two general branches, as it regards either the first coming of the Messiah, or the various fortunes

of his doctrine and his church, until his second coming. With this object, every prophecy hath immediate or remote connexion. Not but that in many predictions, in many large portions of the prophetic word, the Messiah and the events of his kingdom are not immediately brought in view as the principal objects; yet in none of the Scripture prophecies are those objects set wholly out of sight, inasmuch as the secular events to which many parts of prophecy relate, will be found, upon a close inspection, to be such as either in earlier times affected the fortunes of the Jewish people, or in later ages the state of Christendom, and were of considerable effect upon the propagation of the true religion, either as they promoted or as they obstructed it. Thus, we have predictions of the fall of the old Assyrian empire, and the desolation of Nineveh, its capital,—of the destruction of Tyre, and the ravages of Nebuchadnezzar in the neighbourhood of Palestine,—of the overthrow of the Babylonian empire, by Cyrus—of the

Persian, by Alexander,—of the division of the eastern world, after the death of Alexander, among his captains,—of the long wars between the rival kingdoms of Syria and Egypt,—of the intestine quarrels and court intrigues of those two kingdoms,—of the propagation of Mahomet's imposture,—of the decline of the Roman empire,—of the rise and growth of the papal tyranny and superstition. Such events as these became the subject of prophecy, because their consequences touched the state of the true religion; and yet they were of a kind in which, if in any, the thoughtless and inconsiderate would be apt to question the controul of Providence. Read the histories of these great revolutions: you will find they were effected by what you might the least guess to be the instruments of Providence,—by the restless ambition of princes,—by the intrigues of wicked statesmen,—by the treachery of false sycophants,—by the mad passions of abandoned or of capricious women,—by the phrenzy of enthusiasts,—by the craft of hypocrites,

But, although God hath indeed no *need* of the wicked man, yet his wisdom and his mercy find frequent use for him, and render even his vices subservient to the benevolent purposes of Providence. The evidence of a vigilant providence thus mercifully exerted, arises from the prediction of those events, which, while they result from the worst crimes of men, do yet in their consequences affect the state of religion and the condition of the virtuous. If such events lay out of the controul of God's providence, they could not fall within the comprehension of his prescience: but, what God hath predicted, he foreknew,—what he foreknew, he predetermined,—what God hath predetermined—whatever bad action he permits to be done, must no less certainly, though less immediately than the good actions which he approves, operate, by the direction of his universal providence, to the final benefit of the virtuous. This comfortable assurance, therefore, "that all things work together for good to them that love God," is derived from pro-

phecy, especially from those parts of prophecy which predict those crimes of men by which the interests of religion are affected; and, to afford this comfort to the godly, such crimes are made the subject of the sacred oracles.

Thus you see, that, in all prophecy, the state of religion is the object, and the interests of religion are the end. Hence it is, that as a man, whose mind is bent upon the accomplishment of some great design, will be apt, upon every occasion of discourse, to introduce allusions to that which is ever uppermost in his thoughts, and nearest to his heart, so the Holy Spirit of God, when he moved his prophets to speak of the affairs of this low world, was perpetually suggesting allusions to the great design of Providence, the uniting of all things under Christ. And whoever would edify by the prophetic word, must keep this great object constantly in view, that he may be ready to catch at transient hints and oblique insinuations, which often occur where they might be the least expected.

Nor is an active attention to the events of the world less necessary. That prophecy should fetch its interpretation from the events of history, is a necessary consequence of its divine original: it is a part of the contrivance, and a part without which prophecy would have been so little beneficial—rather, indeed, pernicious to mankind—that, seeing God is infinitely wise and good, this could not but be a part of his contrivance. This is very peremptorily declared in the original of my text; where the expression is not, as in the English, "no prophecy *is*," but "no prophecy is *made* of self-interpretation." No prophecy is to be found in Scripture, which is not purposely so framed as *not* to be of self-interpretation. 'Twas undoubtedly within the power of the Almighty, to have delivered the whole of prophecy in terms no less clear and explicit than those in which the general promises of revelation are conveyed, or particular deliverances of the Jewish people occasionally announced: but his wisdom reprobated this unreserved predic-

tion of futurity, because it would have enlarged the foresight of man beyond the proportion of his other endowments, and beyond the degree adapted to his present condition. To avoid this mischief, and to attain the useful end of prophecy, which is to afford the highest proof of Providence, it was necessary that prophecy should be delivered in such disguise as to be dark while the event is remote, to clear up as it approaches, and to be rendered perspicuous by the accomplishment. And in this disguise prophecy hath actually been delivered, because it comes from God, who is good and wise, and dispenses all his blessings in the manner and degree in which they may be truly blessings to his creatures. Knowledge were no blessing, were it not adjusted to the circumstances and proportioned to the faculties of those to whom it is imparted.

I trust that it appears to you, that the apostle's maxim, "that no prophecy can be its own interpreter," does necessarily follow from

the matter of fact alleged as its foundation, that "all prophecy is from God."

You will reap a rich harvest of improvement from these disquisitions, if, now that you understand the apostle's rule of interpretation, you will learn to *use* it when you read or hear the prophecies of holy writ. In my next discourses, I shall endeavour, with God's assistance, to teach you the use of it, by examples of its application.

SERMON XVI.

2 PETER, i. 20, 21.

"*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*"

THIS period hath already been the subject of one discourse, in which it hath been my endeavour to explain its meaning, and to show the coherence of its parts. Its meaning,—that it propounds a maxim for the interpretation of the prophecies of holy writ, which is this negative proposition, that no prophecy is its own interpreter; and alleges the principle upon which that maxim is founded, that all prophecy came from God. The coherence of its

parts,—inasmuch as the maxim, by necessary and obvious consequence, rises out of the principle alleged as the foundation of it.

I now proceed, as I proposed, to instruct you in the use of the apostle's maxim, by examples of its application. I would not fatigue your attention with unnecessary repetition; but it is of importance that you should recollect that the apostle's negative maxim, "that no prophecy is of self-interpretation," has been shown in effect to contain two affirmative rules of exposition,—that every single text of prophecy is to be considered as a part of an entire system, and to be interpreted in that sense which may best connect it with the whole; and that the sense of prophecy in general is to be sought in the events which have actually taken place.

To qualify the Christian to make a judicious application of these rules, no skill is requisite in verbal criticism—no proficiency in the subtleties of the logician's art—no acquisitions of recondite learning. That degree of under-

standing with which serious minds are ordinarily blessed—those general views of the schemes of Providence, and that general acquaintance with the prophetic language, which no Christian can be wanting in, who is constant, as every true Christian is, in his attendance on the public worship, and gives that serious attention which every true Christian gives to the word of God, as it is read to him in our churches, and expounded from our pulpits,—these qualifications, accompanied with a certain strength of memory and quickness of recollection, which exercise and habit bring—and with a certain patience of attention in comparing parallel texts,—these qualifications will enable the pious though unlearned Christian to succeed in the application of the apostle's rules, so far at least as to derive much rational amusement —much real edification—much consolation—much confirmation of his faith—much animation of his hopes—much joy and peace in believing, from that heedful meditation of the prophetic word, which all men would do

well to remember an inspired apostle hath enjoined.

The first instance to which I shall apply the apostle's rules, is the very first prediction which occurs in the Bible—the prophetic curse upon the serpent, which we read in the third chapter of the book of Genesis. "Thou art cursed above all cattle of the field. Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it (or rather "he") shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." To judge of the illustration that this prophecy may receive from the apostle's rules, it will be proper previously to settle what may be the full meaning of the words, taken by themselves. For this purpose, let us suppose that the passage were recited to some uninstructed heathen, who should be totally unacquainted with the Bible, and with every part of its contents: suppose him quite ignorant of the story of the fall—ignorant upon what oc-

casion the words were spoken, or by whom: suppose that he were only told, that once upon a time these words were spoken to a serpent;—think ye he would discern in them any thing prophetic?—He must have more than the serpent's cunning, if he did. He would tell you they contain a few obvious remarks upon the condition of the serpent kind, upon the antipathy which nature has established between men and serpents, and upon the natural advantages of man over the venomed reptile. "The serpent," says he, "is told, that, for the extent of his natural powers and enjoyments, he holds his rank with the lowest of the brute creation,—that serpents, by the make of their bodies, are necessitated to crawl upon the ground,—that, although they have a poison in their mouths, the greatest mischief they can do to men is to bite them by the heels; whereas men, by the foresight of their danger, and by their erect posture, have greatly the advantage, and knock serpents on the head wherever they chance to find them." This would be our

heathen's exposition; nor could the most subtle criticism draw any farther meaning from the terms of this denunciation.

But, now, let our heathen be made acquainted with the particulars of the story of the fall; and let him understand that these words were addressed to the individual serpent which had tempted Eve, by the Omnipotent Creator, when he came in person to pronounce the dreadful doom upon deluded ruined man;—our heathen will immediately perceive that this was no season for pursuing a useless speculation on the natural history of the serpent; nor was so obvious a remark upon the comparative powers of the serpent kind and man better fitted to the majesty of the great Being to whom it is ascribed, than to the solemnity of the occasion upon which it was introduced: and he could not but suspect that more must be meant than meets the ear. He would observe, that the words were addressed to the serpent, in the character of the seducer of our first parents,—that the denunciation made a part of a judicial

procedure, in which a striking regularity appears in the distribution of the several branches of the business.—Three delinquents stand before the Maker of the world, to answer for a crime in which each had borne a part. Adam, as first in rank, is first questioned. He acknowledges his crime, but imputes the blame to Eve's persuasions. Eve is next examined. She confesses the truth of her husband's accusation, but she taxes the serpent as her seducer. The Creator proceeds to judgment. And in this part it is remarkable, that the person who had been first interrogated is the last condemned: for the first words spoken by the Judge, after he has received the confession of the human pair, are those in which he accosts the serpent; then he addresses himself to Eve, —to Adam last. The words addressed to Eve are the sentence of the Judge, denouncing the penalties to be sustained by her, for having listened to the serpent, and made herself the instrument of the man's seduction. The words addressed to Adam are the sentence of the

Judge on him, for having yielded to Eve's solicitation.—From the plain order of the business, our heathen would conclude that these words, addressed to the serpent, are a sentence upon him, as the first seducer. He would observe, that as, in the narrative of the temptation, contrivance, design, and speech, are ascribed to the serpent, so, in these words, he is accosted as the object of animadversion and punishment. He would say, "This was no common serpent of the field, but some intelligent and responsible agent, in the serpent form; and, in the evils decreed to the life and condition of the serpent, this individual serpent solely is concerned. The enmity which is mentioned, between the serpent and mankind, must express some farther insidious designs on the part of this deceiver, with resistance on the part of man; and in the declaration, that, while serpents should have no power but to wound the heels of men, men should bruise the heads of serpents, it is certainly intimated, by metaphors taken from the condi-

tion and powers of the natural serpent, that the calamities which the stratagems of this enemy in disguise should bring on man, would prove light, in comparison of the greater mischiefs which man shall inflict on him. It is intimated, that man's wound, although, like the serpent's bite, it might be fatal in its consequences if it were neglected, was however curable. The reptile's tooth had lodged its malignant poison in the heel. Considerable time must pass, before the blood and juices could be mortally infected;—in the interval, remedies might be applied to prevent the threatened mischief. Again, the declaration that God himself puts this enmity between the serpent and mankind, implies, that the merciful though offended God will yet take an interest in the fortunes of man, and will support him in his conflict with the adversary."

You see, that, by considering this denunciation of the serpent's doom in connexion only with that particular story of which it is a part, without any knowledge of later prophecies and

revelations, our heathen has been able to dive into the prophetic meaning of words, which, taken by themselves, he did not know to be at all prophetic. The particular events, indeed, which may correspond to the images of the prediction, he hath not yet been able to assign; but of the general purport of the prophecy he has formed a very just notion. He is besides aware, that mysteries are contained in it, more than he can yet unravel. He is sensible that it cannot be without some important meaning, that either the whole or some remarkable part of Adam's posterity, contrary to the general notions of mankind, and the common forms of all languages, is expressed under the image of the woman's seed rather than the man's. I must here observe, that Adam, with respect to the insight he may be supposed to have had into the sense of this curse upon the serpent, was probably for some time much in the situation of our supposed heathen,—aware that it contained a general intimation of an intended deliverance, but much in the dark about the

particular explication of it. This prophecy was therefore, to Adam, when it was first delivered, so far intelligible as to be a ground of hope,—at the same time that the darkness of the terms in which it was conceived must have kept him anxiously attentive to every event that might seem connected with the completion of it, and to any new light that might be given him by succeeding predictions or promises. And, by the way, this points out one important secondary use of the original obscurity and gradual elucidation of prophecy, by succeeding prophecies and by events,—this method of prediction awakens the curiosity of mankind.

But let us give our heathen, whose curiosity is keen upon the subject, farther lights. Let us carry him, by proper steps, through the whole volume of the sacred oracles; and let us instruct him in that great mystery of godliness, which from the beginning of the world was hidden with God, but in these later ages hath been made manifest by the preaching

of the blessed apostles and evangelists; and, when his heart is touched with a sense of the mercies conferred on him through Christ—when he has taken a view of the whole of the prophetic word, and has seen its correspondence with the history of Jesus, and the beginnings of his gospel, let him then return to the curse upon the serpent. Will he now find in it any thing ambiguous or obscure? Will he hesitate a moment to pronounce, that the serpent who received this dreadful doom could be no other than an animated emblem of that malignant spirit, who, in the latest prophecies, is called the *Old Dragon?* Or rather, will he not pronounce, that this serpent was that very spirit, in his proper person, dragged, by some unseen power, into the presence of Jehovah, to receive his doom in the same reptile form which he had assumed to wreck his spite on unsuspecting man; for which exploit of wicked and dishonourable cunning, the opprobrious names of the Serpent and the Dragon have ever since been fixed upon him in derision and

reproach? Will not our enlightened and converted heathen understand the circumstances which are mentioned of the serpent's natural condition, as intimations of something analogous in the degraded state of the rebellious angel? By the days of the serpent's life, will he not understand a certain limited period, during which, for the exercise of man's virtue, and the fuller manifestation of God's power and goodness, the infernal Dragon is to be permitted to live his life of malice, to exercise his art of delusion on the sons of men?—while, in the adjuncts of that life, the grovelling posture and the gritty meal, will he not read the condition of a vile and despicable being, to whom all indulgence but that of malice is denied—to whom little freedom of action is intrusted? Will he have a doubt that the seed of this serpent are the same that in other places are called the Devil's angels? Will he not correct his former surmises about the seed of the woman, and the wound to be inflicted by the serpent in the heel? Will he not perceive, that the seed

of the woman is an image, not generally descriptive of the descendants of Adam, but characteristic of an individual—emphatically expressive of that person, who, by the miraculous manner of his conception, was peculiarly and properly the son of Eve,—that the wound to be suffered by this person in the heel, denotes the sufferings with which the Devil and his emissaries were permitted to exercise the Captain of our Salvation? And will he not discern, in the accomplishment of man's redemption, and the successful propagation of the gospel, the mortal blow inflicted on the serpent's head?—when the ignorance which he had spread over the world was dispelled by the light of revelation, —when his secret influence on the hearts of men, to inflame their passions, to debauch their imaginations and mislead their thoughts, was counteracted by the graces of God's Holy Spirit, aiding the external administration of the word,—when, with much of its invisible power, his kingdom lost the whole of its external pomp and splendour. Silence being imposed on his

oracles, and spells and inchantments being divested of their power, the idolatrous worship which by those engines of deceit he had universally established, and for ages supported, notwithstanding the antiquity of its institutions, and the bewitching gayety and magnificence of its festivals, fell into neglect. Its cruel and lascivious rites, so long holden in superstitious veneration, on a sudden became the object of a just and general abhorrence; and the unfrequented temples, stripped, no doubt, of their rich ornaments and costly offerings, sunk in ruins. These were the early effects of the promulgation of the gospel,—effects of the power of Christ exalted to his throne, openly spoiling principalities and powers, and trampling the Dragon under foot. When these effects of Christianity began to be perceived, which was very soon after our Lord's ascension,—when magicians openly forswore their ruined art, and burned their useless books,—when the fiend of divination, confessing the power by which he was subdued, ceased to actuate his

rescued prophetess,—when the worshippers of the Ephesian Diana avowed their apprehensions for the tottering reputation of their goddess,—then it was that the seed of the woman was seen to strike and bruise the serpent's head.

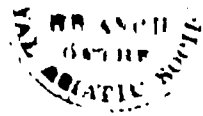
Thus you see, that as the general purport of this prophecy was readily opened by an attention to the circumstances of the memorable transaction which gave occasion to it, so a comparison of it with later prophecies, and with events (which, to whatever cause they may be referred, have confessedly and notoriously taken place), naturally leads to a particular and circumstantial explication.

It is remarkable that this, which is of all the most ancient prophecy of the general redemption, is perhaps, of any single prediction that can be produced, upon many accounts the most satisfactory and convincing. For, in the first place, although it be conveyed in the most highly figured language, the general meaning of it, though less obvious, is no less single and

precise than the most plain and simple expressions might have made it. It was uttered by the voice of God himself; therefore two different and unequal intellects were not, as in every instance of prophecy uttered by a man, concerned in the delivery of it. The occasion upon which it was delivered was of such importance as necessarily to exclude all other business: its general meaning, therefore, must be connected, which is not the case of every prophecy, with the occasion upon which it was spoken; and with that occasion one meaning only can possibly connect it. The serpent accosted could be no other serpent than Eve's seducer,—the curse, no other curse than such as might be adapted to that deceiver's nature,—the enmity, no other enmity but what might be exercised between beings of such natures as man and his seducer,—and the bruises in the heel and in the head, no other mischiefs to either party than that enmity might produce. So that the general meaning to which the occasion points, is no less certain than if our enemy

had been accosted in some such plain terms as these: "Satan! thou art accursed beyond all the spirits of thy impious confederacy. Short date is granted to the farther workings of thy malice; and all the while thou shalt heavily drag the burden of an unblessed existence,—fettered in thy energies, cramped in thy enjoyments; and thy malevolent attempts on man, though for a time they may affect, and perchance, through his own folly, endanger his condition, shall terminate in the total extinction of thine own power, and in the aggravation of thy misery and abasement; and, to gall thee more, he who shall undo thy deeds, restore the ruined world, and be thy conqueror and avenger, shall be a son, though in no natural way, of this deluded woman."

Again, no less certain than the general meaning derived from the occasion of this prophecy, is the particular exposition of it by the analogy of prophecy, and by the event. The images of this prediction, however dark they might be when it was first delivered, carry, we find, in



the prophetic language, a fixed unvaried meaning. The image of the serpent answers to no being in universal nature but the Devil. Prophecy knows no seed of the woman—it ascribes the miraculous conception to which this name alludes to none but the Emanuel; nor shall we find, in the whole progeny of Eve, a person to whom the character may belong, but the child in the manger at Bethlehem, the holy fruit of Mary's unpolluted womb.

Lastly, the event which answers to the image in the conclusion of this prophecy, the bruise upon the serpent's head, is in its nature single; for the universal extirpation of idolatry, and the general establishment of the pure worship of the true God, is a thing which must be done once for all, and being done, can never be repeated. A prophecy thus definite in its general purport, conveyed in images of a fixed and constant meaning, and corresponding to an event in its nature single—a sudden and universal revolution of the religious opinions and practices of all the civilized nations of the known

world,—such a prophecy, so accomplished, must be allowed to be a proof that the whole work and counsel was of God, if in any case it be allowed that the nature of the cause may be known by the effect.

I mean hereafter to apply the apostle's rules to instances of prophecy of another kind, in which we find neither the same settled signification in the imagery, nor the same singularity of completion.

SERMON XVII.

2 PETER, i. 20.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation."

I PROCEED in the task I have undertaken, to exemplify the use of those rules of interpretation which the maxim of my text contains; which are these two,—to refer particular predictions to the system; and to compare prophecies with events. In my last discourse, I showed you with what certainty and facility they lead to the explication of the first prophecy that was ever given—that which was uttered by the voice of God himself, in the form of a curse upon the serpent, the adviser of

Adam's disobedience. I shall now try them in an instance of a very different kind, where the occasion of the prediction does not so clearly ascertain its general purport,—where the images employed are less fixed to one constant meaning,—and where, among the events that have happened since the prophecy was given, a variety may be found to correspond with it, all in such exactness, that every one of the number may seem to have a right to pass for the intended completion.

The first prophecy uttered by the voice of God, furnished an example of a prediction in which the general meaning was from the first certain, and the imagery of the diction simple, and of which the accomplishment hath been single. The earliest prophecy recorded in the sacred volume, of those which were uttered by men, furnishes the example that we now seek, of a prediction originally doubtful in its general meaning, comprehensive in its imagery, various in its completion. Such was the prophecy in which Noah, awakened from his wine, and

inflamed with resentment at the irreverent levity of his younger son, denounced the heavy curse on his posterity, and described the future fortunes of the three general branches of mankind. "Cursed be Canaan;—a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. Blessed be Jehovah God of Shem!—and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be *his* servant."

The only explicit part of this prophecy is the curse upon Canaan, Ham's youngest son; of whose descendants it is openly foretold that they should live in a state of the lowest subjection to nations which should issue from the two other sons of Noah. And yet here we find some obscurity; for how was Canaan to be in slavery both to Shem and Japhet? The evangelic maxim, "that no man can serve two masters," seems applicable here in a literal sense. This difficulty, the apostle's maxim, of applying for the explication of the sacred oracles to the occurrences of the world, rea-

dily removes. It appears from sacred history, that so early as in the time of Abraham, the Canaanites were governed by petty princes of their own, who were the tributary vassals of the Assyrian monarchy, then newly arisen under princes of the family of Ashur, Shem's second son. And from prophane history we learn, that when the Canaanites fled from the victorious arms of Joshua, and when the remainder of them were expelled by David, they settled in those parts of Africa which first fell under the dominion of the Romans, the undoubted descendants of Japhet. Thus Canaan in early ages was the slave of Shem, and in later times of Japhet.

But this is neither the most difficult nor the most interesting part of the prophecy. Let us turn our attention to the blessings pronounced upon the two other branches. And we will first consider Japhet's part, because it seems of the two the most explicit. "God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." The most obvious meaning of the

words, I think, is this,—that the gracious purpose of Providence was to bless Japhet with a numerous progeny, which hould spread over an ample tract of ountry; and that, not satisfied, or not sufficiently accommodated with their own territory, they would be apt to encroach upon Shem's descendants, and make settlements within their borders. And as this is the most obvious sense of the words, so it is justified by the apostle's rules; for history supports it. The whole of Europe, and a considerable part of Asia, was originally peopled, and hath been ever occupied by Japhet's offspring, who, not contented with these vast demesnes, have been from time to time repeatedly making encroachments on the sons of Shem; as was notoriously the case, when Alexander the Great, with a European army, attacked and overthrew the Persian monarchy—when the Romans subjugated a great part of the East,—and still more notoriously, when the Tartar conquerors of the race of Genghis Khan demolished the great empire of the Ca-

liphs, took possession of their country, and made settlements and erected kingdoms in all parts of Asia and the East—and again, when Tamerlane settled his Moguls, another branch of Japhet's progeny, in Indostan, whose descendants gradually got possession of that immense country, a part of Shem's original inheritance, which forms the present empire of the Great Mogul. These events, not to mention other less remarkable incursions of Scythians into Shem's parts of Asia, may well be deemed an accomplishment of the patriarch's prophetic benediction; not only because they answer to the natural import of the terms of it, but because every one of them had great consequences upon the state of the true religion, and the condition of its professors in various parts of the world, and some of them have been the subjects of later prophecies. So that, in this interpretation, we find the two circumstances which, according to the apostle, are the best characteristics of a true interpretation,—an agreement with the truth of history, and a con-

nexion of this particular prediction with the system of the prophetic word.

It may seem, however, that some amicable intercourse between certain branches of the two families—some peaceable settlements of descendants of Japhet in nations arisen from the other stock, may be no less conveniently denoted, by the expression of "Japhet's dwelling in the tents of Shem," than the violent encroachments of conquerors of the line of Japhet. And this interpretation does not ill agree with history, or, to speak more properly, with the present state of the two families. The settlements of Portuguese, English, Dutch, and French—all of us descended from the loins of Japhet, made within the three last centuries in different parts of India—all of it a part of Shem's inheritance, have given the prophecy in this sense a striking accomplishment. Nor, in this interpretation, is the necessary connexion wanting of this particular prediction with the prophetic system; for consequences cannot but arise, although they have not yet appeared, of great

moment to the interests of the true religion, from such numerous and extensive settlements of professed Christians, in countries where the light of the gospel hath for many ages been extinguished.

Thus, you see, history leads us to two senses of this prophecy, of which each may contain an unlimited variety of particular accomplishments; since every settlement of Europeans or of Asiatic Tartars in the lower Asia and the East, whether gained by war or procured by commercial treaties, connects with the prophecy in one or other of these two senses.

A third sense is yet behind: but, to bring it the more readily to light, it will be proper previously to consider the sense of Shem's blessing,—a blessing obliquely conveyed in this emphatic ejaculation, "Blessed be Jehovah God of Shem!"—an ejaculation in which this assertion is evidently implied, that "Jehovah should be Shem's God;" and this is the whole of Shem's blessing,—a blessing, indeed, which could receive no addition or improve-

ment. It can admit of no dispute, that Jehovah is here styled the God of Shem, in the same sense in which in later times he vouchsafed to call himself the God of a particular branch of Shem's progeny—of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, and of their descendants the Jewish people. Jehovah is indeed the God of all the nations of the earth—the Universal Father, whose tender mercies are over all his works; but, to a particular branch of Shem's family, he was for a time more peculiarly a God, inasmuch as he chose them to be the depositaries of the true religion, while the rest of mankind were sunk in the ignorance and abomination of idolatry. Their temporal concerns he condescended to take under the visible direction of his special providence,—to them he revealed his sacred incommunicable name,—among them he preserved the knowledge and worship of himself, by a series of miraculous dispensations, till the destined season came for the general redemption; and then he raised up, among the offspring of that chosen stock, that Saviour,

whose divine doctrine hath spread the knowledge and worship of the true God among all nations, and whose meritorious sacrifice of himself hath made atonement for the sins of the whole world. These were the privileges in store for a select branch of Shem's family, when this prophecy was delivered,—privileges by which they were put in a condition to attain the highest blessings both in this world and in the next—the height of national prosperity, and the sum of future bliss; and Shem being yet alive, and his family not split into its branches, it was natural, and agreeable to the usage of the prophetic style, that the future blessings of the offspring should be referred to the ancestor. This, therefore, is the oracular sense of the patriarch's emphatic compellation of Jehovah as the God of Shem. "Thou, O Jehovah! shalt be the God of Shem,—the object of his worship and the guardian of his fortunes; while the progeny of his brethren shall place their foolish trust in those which are no gods."

This exposition of Shem's blessing will naturally lead to a new sense of Japhet's, if we only recollect what external means were used by Providence to preserve the knowledge of the true God in the chosen branch of Shem's family. These means were—the call of Abraham—the personal intercourse holden with him and his two next descendants—and, in due time, the institution of the Mosaic religion; of which religion, you will particularly observe, the tabernacle and the service performed in it were the chief external instruments. The magnificence of the tabernacle—its stately support of upright pillars resting on their silver sockets, and transverse beams overlaid with gold—its gorgeous hangings within, of purple, linen, blue, and scarlet, with the buttons of gold—its noble covering without, of the shaggy skins of goats—its rich furniture, the seven-branched candlestick, the altars, and the implements of sacrifice, all of brass or gold, pure or overlaid—the ark, containing the ta-

bles of the law, with the mercy-seat overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim—but above all, the glorious light which filled the sacred pavilion, the symbol of Jehovah's presence,—this glory of the tabernacle in ancient times, and of the temple afterwards, was probably what most caught the admiration of the Jewish people, and attached them to a religion which had so much splendour in its externals, and in which something of what is visible of the majesty of the Divine Being met the senses of the worshippers.

Bearing this remark in mind, let us now turn again to that part of the prophecy which concerns Japhet's family, especially the latter clause of it—"he shall dwell in the tabernacles of Shem." The blessing promised to Shem, we have found to be the miraculous preservation of the true religion in a chosen branch of Shem's family. Might not the prediction of this merciful design of Providence naturally introduce an allusion to the external means by

which it was to be effected? Among the external means, we have seen reason to think that the Jewish tabernacle was the most generally efficacious: but under what description is it likely that the tabernacle, not erected till the days of Moses, should be mentioned in prophecy so early as the days of Noah,—and in this prophecy in particular, in which Jehovah, for the intention of maintaining the true religion in a branch of Shem's family, is characterized as the God of Shem?—A beautiful consistency of imagery will be maintained, if the tent which Jehovah was to pitch for this purpose among men, should be called Shem's tabernacle, or Shem's tent; for a tent and a tabernacle are one and the same thing, and the word in the Hebrew is the same. This holy tent or tabernacle was Shem's tabernacle, because it was erected among the sons of Shem, and because none might bear a part in the whole service of it, who did not incorporate with the chosen family.

But, farther. This tabernacle, and the service performed in it, were emblems of the Christian church and of the Christian service. When all these circumstances are put together, can any doubt remain, that, in the mention of the tents of Shem, the Holy Spirit made allusion to the Jewish tabernacle as an emblem of the Christian church; and that the dwelling of Japhet in these tents of Shem, took place when the idolatrous nations of Japhet's line, converted to the faith of Christ, became worshippers of the God of Shem in Shem's tabernacles—worshippers of the true God, in the modes of worship prescribed by revealed religion.

And this interpretation well agrees with the apostle's maxim, being supported both by the harmony of the prophetic system and the truth of history.

For the harmony of the prophetic system. This interpretation brings this particular prediction to bear directly upon the general ob-

ject of prophecy, the uniting of all nations in the faith of Christ; and it is worthy of particular remark, that, from the delivery of this prediction, the conversion of the Gentiles made a standing part of all the prophecies of the Saviour. Now, that nothing of variation might appear in the schemes of Providence, it should seem that it was requisite that the first intimation of the design of selecting a peculiar people, which is contained in Shem's blessing, should be accompanied with an intimation of the general mercies of which that measure was to be productive to all mankind: but of the general benefit intended we have in this place no intimation, if it be not conveyed in Japhet's benediction,—in which benediction it is not conveyed, unless this sense of that benediction be admitted. This interpretation, therefore, of the prophetic blessing pronounced on Japhet, most of all connects it with the great object of prophecy, and best maintains the harmony of the prophetic system.

Then for history. The fact is notorious, that the gospel, from the beginning to the present times, hath made the greatest progress in Europe, and in those parts of Asia which were first peopled by the posterity of Japhet. Among the uncivilized descendants of Ham, and the degenerate sons of Shem, it hath not been so generally spread, or hath not so deeply taken root.

Beside this evident agreement with history and the prophetic system, another circumstance is much in favour of this interpretation, which is this,—that the images of this prediction bear a near affinity to those under which later prophets have described the same event. Hear in what language the prophet Isaiah announces the conversion of the Gentiles, in words addressed to the Jewish church, as the emblem of the Christian. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations." Or, as the words are more significantly rendered in a late translation, "Let the canopy of thy habitation be ex-

tended. Spare not: lengthen thy cords, and firmly fix thy stakes. For on the right hand and on the left thou shalt burst forth with increase, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles." Here, you see, Isaïah's allusion is to the tabernacle; and the image presented to him is an enlargement of the sacred tent, to contain new crowds of worshippers; and the stakes are to be driven deep and firm—the cords are to be lengthened and drawn tight, that the sides of the tent may be able to sustain the pressure of the multitudes within it. Noah's allusion is also to the tabernacle; and the image presented to him is the admission of foreign worshippers. It is therefore one and the same scene which the patriarch and the younger prophet have before them; and, except in the distinct mention of that particular circumstance, that the new worshippers should be chiefly of Japhet's stock, Noah's prophecy differs not from Isaiah's, otherwise than as an outline differs from a more finished drawing of the same objects.

Thus, by the apostle's rules, prophecy, in that part of it which regards the family of Japhet, is brought to three senses, in each of which it hath been remarkably verified,—in the settlements of European and Tartarian conquerors in the Lower Asia and in the East, —in the settlements of European traders on the coasts of Indostan,—but especially in the numerous and early conversions of the idolaters of Japhet's line (among whom it is fit that we of this island should remember our own ancestors were included) to the worship of the one true God, and to the faith of Christ.

I am sensible that this variety of intent and meaning discovered in a single prophecy, brings on a question of no small difficulty, and of the first importance. It is this,—What evidence of a providence may arise from predictions like the one we have now been considering, in which a variety of unconnected events, independent, to all appearance, of each other, and very distant in times, seem to be prefigured by the same images? And, although it be a di-

gression from my main subject, yet as the inquiry is of the highest importance, and spontaneously presents itself, it is to this that I shall devote the remainder of the present discourse.

I shall not wonder, if, to those who have not sifted this question to the bottom (which few, I am persuaded, have done), the evidence of a providence, arising from prophecies of this sort, should appear to be very slender, or none at all. Nor shall I scruple to confess, that time was when I was myself in this opinion, and was therefore much inclined to join with those who think that every prophecy, were it rightly understood, would be found to carry a precise and single meaning, and that, wherever the double sense appears, it is because the one true sense hath not yet been detected. I said, "Either the images of the prophetic style have constant and proper relations to the events of the world, as the words of common speech have proper and constant meanings,—or they

have not. If they have, then it seems no less difficult to conceive that many events should be shadowed under the images of one and the same prophecy, than that several likenesses should be expressed in a single portrait. But, if the prophetic images have no such appropriate relations to things, but that the same image may stand for many things, and various events be included in a single prediction, then it should seem that prophecy, thus indefinite in its meaning, can afford no proof of providence: for it should seem possible, that a prophecy of this sort, by whatever principle the world were governed, whether by providence, nature, or necessity, might owe a seeming completion to mere accident." And since it were absurd to suppose that the Holy Spirit of God should frame prophecies by which the end of prophecy might so ill be answered, it seemed a just and fair conclusion, that no prophecy of holy writ might carry a double meaning.

Thus I reasoned, till a patient investigation of the subject brought me, by God's blessing, to a better mind. I stand clearly and unanswerably confuted, by the instance of Noah's prophecy concerning the family of Japhet; which hath actually received various accomplishments, in events of various kinds, in various ages of the world,—in the settlements of European and Tartarian conquerors in the Lower Asia, in the settlements of European traders on the coasts of India, and in the early and plentiful conversion of the families of Japhet's stock to the faith of Christ. The application of the prophecy to any one of these events bears all the characteristics of a true interpretation,—consistence with the terms of the prophecy, consistence with the truth of history, consistence with the prophetic system. Every one of these events must therefore pass, with every believer, for a true completion.

A plain instance, therefore, being found in holy writ, of a prophecy which bears more than

a double meaning, the question, what evidence such prophecies may afford of a divine providence, becomes of the highest moment. I enter upon the discussion of it with this preliminary observation,—that if our suspicion that such prophecies may receive a seeming accomplishment by chance, or by the natural and necessary course of the world, should appear, upon a strict examination, unreasonable and ill-founded, the consequence will be, that the evidence arising from this sort of prophecy is of the highest kind; since the greater the variety of events may be to which a single combination of images shall be found to correspond, the more of art and contrivance is displayed in the framing of the prophecy, and the more of power (if accident be clearly excluded) in bringing about the completion. Our whole inquiry, therefore, is reduced within a narrow compass, since the whole is brought to rest upon this single question, May the accomplishment of such predictions be, or may it *not*

be accidental? If it may, then such prophecies are frivolous, and the Deity is blasphemed when they are ascribed to him. If it may not, then such prophecies are most complete and wonderful demonstrations of the absolute foreknowledge and universal providence of God. The negative of this great question, which leads to these comfortable and glorious consequences, I purpose to sustain. I mean to show you, that, amidst all the comprehension and variety of meaning which is to be found in any prophecies of holy writ, and which, in the instance before us, of Noah's prophecy, is indeed wonderful, certain restrictions and limitations will always be found, by which the power of accident, or any other but an intelligent cause, is no less excluded from any share in the completion, than it is in other instances, where the prediction, like the curse upon the serpent, points direct and full at a single event. The method which I shall pursue to make this appear, shall be to argue upon Noah's prophecy,

which I have so particularly expounded, as an instance; and my method of arguing upon this instance shall be, to contrast it, in every circumstance, with a pretended prediction, which, for the propriety of its images, and the exactness of its completion, hath been compared and set in competition with the prophecies of holy writ.

A heathen poet, whose subject leads him to speak of a certain voyage, which, if it was ever really performed, was the first attempt of any European nation to cross the main seas in a large ship with masts and sails, describes, in elegant and animated strains, the consequences which the success of so extraordinary an undertaking might be expected to produce upon the state of mankind, the free intercourse that was likely to be opened between distant nations, and the great discoveries to be expected from voyages in future times, when the arts of shipbuilding and navigation, to which this expedition, if a real one, gave rise, should be car-

ried to perfection. This is his general argument, and verses to this effect make the conclusion of his song.

" ——————— Distant years
Shall bring the fated season, when Ocean,
Nature's prime barrier, shall no more obstruct
The daring search of enterprising man.
The earth, so wide, shall all be open,—
The mariner explore new worlds;
Nor Shetland be the utmost shore." *

" Now give me," says the infidel, † " a prophecy from your Bible, which may be as clearly predictive of any event which you may choose to allege for the accomplishment, as these verses have by mere accident proved to be, of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Give me such a prophecy from

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* " ——————— Venient annis
Sæcula seris, quibus Oceanus
Vincula rerum laxat, et ingens
Pateat tellus, Tiphysque novos
Detegat orbes; nec sit terris
Ultima Thule."
Seneca, Medea, 374. &c.

† Anthony Collins.

your Bible, as I have produced to you from a heathen poet, who yet was no prophet, nor claimed the character, and I will turn believer." We cheerfully accept this arrogant defiance;—we are thankful to the adversary that he hath invited us to meet him on such advantageous ground, by comparing what may justly be deemed the most indefinite of the Scripture prophecies, with the best specimen of the power of accident for the completion of prophecy which his extensive reading could produce.

These verses of his Latin poet are, indeed, a striking example of a prediction that might safely take its chance in the world, and, happen what might, could not fail at some time or other to meet with its accomplishment. Indeed, it predicts nothing but what was evidently within the ken of human foresight,—that men, being once furnished with the means of discovery, would make discoveries,—that, having ships, they would make voyages,—that, when improvements in the art of ship-

building should have furnished larger and better ships, men would make longer and more frequent voyages,—and that, by longer and more frequent voyages, they would gain more knowledge of the surface of the globe which they inhabit. What peasant of Thessaly but might have uttered such prophecies as these, who saw the Argo bring her heroes home, and observed to what degree the avarice and curiosity of his countrymen were inflamed, by the wealth which the adventurers had amassed, and the stories which they spread? What restriction do we find of the generality of these prognostications, which may seem to put the exact completion out of the reach of accidental causes? None. Neither the parts of the world are specified from which expeditions of discovery should be fitted out, nor the quarters in which they should most succeed: or, if any particular intimation upon the latter article be couched in the mention of Shetland as an island that should cease to be extreme, it is erroneous, as it points precisely to that quar-

ter of the globe where discovery hath been ever at a stand,—where the ocean, to this hour, opposes his eternal barrier of impervious unnavigable ice.

So much for our infidel's prophecy. Let us now compare the patriarch's. Of this, indeed, the topics are most general,—the increase of mankind—empire and servitude—varieties of religion—conquests—migration—foreign settlements. The increase of mankind was to be foreseen from physical causes;—that mankind, being increased, some part would govern, might be probably conjectured;—that one part governing, another part must serve, was of necessity to be concluded;—that a part of mankind would fall from the worship of the one true God, was to be feared, from the example of the antediluvian world;—that conquerors would plant colonies, and merchants make settlements in foreign countries, the same example might persuade. So far the comparison may wear a promising aspect on our adversary's side: but let him not exult be-

fore his victory is complete. Let him tell me by what natural sagacity the patriarch might foresee—by what analogy of antediluvian history he might conjecture, that Japhet's line would have so greatly the advantage over Shem's, in the rate of increase by propagation, and in the extent of territory, that when he speaks of God's enlarging Japhet, he should esteem the enlargement of Shem in either instance unworthy to be mentioned. Did blind causes bring about the agreement, which all history proves, between the patriarch's conjecture and the event of things? "Unquestionably," the adversary will reply, "blind causes brought this about. Physical causes determine the rate of propagation, and with the rate of propagation the growth of empire is naturally connected." It is granted. But was it within the natural powers of the patriarch's mind to ascertain in *which* line these physical causes should be the most efficacious, while the nations to arise from either of his sons lay yet unissued in the loins of their progenitors?

If not, to what may the agreement be ascribed between the thoughts of the patriarch's mind, which did not command those physical causes, and the effects of causes which could not influence his thoughts, but the energy of that Supreme Mind which hath the thoughts of men and the motions of matter equally in its power?

Again, I ask, by what natural sagacity did the patriarch foresee that Shem's family, rather than any branch of the other two, should retain the knowledge and worship of Jehovah? —that the condition of slavery should be fixed upon a particular branch of Ham's descendants?—that the masters of those slaves should be of the stock of Shem or Japhet, rather than of the collateral branches of their own family? By what natural sagacity did the patriarch foresee the distinct genius and character of whole nations yet unborn?—that the spirit of migration should prevail in the line of Japhet, while the indolent progeny of Shem would ever be averse to foreign settlements, and indifferent

to a distant commerce? Hath it been accident, I would ask, that the history of past ages, and the experience of the present time, confirm the patriarch's conjecture, and falsify the poet's? —for the poet, although the adversary would gladly have suppressed that circumstance, speaks of the intermixture which he thought likely to take place of different nations.* But, unfortunately for the infidel's argument, the poet is wrong precisely in those particulars in which the patriarch is right; and this although the poet lived when the different genius of the sons of Shem and Japhet had shown itself, and lay open to a wise man's observation. "The cool Armenian streams (so the poet guessed) shall quench the parched Indian's thirst, and Persians drink the Rhine and Elbe."* But is it so? Did ever colony of Indians settle in the Upper Asia? Are Persians

* "——————— Indus gelidum
Potat Araxem: Albim Persæ
Rhenumque bibunt."
Seneca, Medea, 372. &c.

to be found upon the banks of the Elbe or Rhine? What said the patriarch? Just the reverse; and that reverse proves true. Tartars from the north of Asia hold possession of Shem's Indian territory, and Japhet's Europe drinks the Ganges!

Was it accident—was it an effect of mechanical causes, that Japhet's sons, when they had been sunk for ages in the abominations of idolatry, were reclaimed at last by the emissaries of that divine teacher who arose among Shem's descendants, and thus settled, according to the patriarch's prediction, in Shem's tabernacles? Was it chance—was it nature—was it fate, that a prophecy like that before us, applicable to events of various sorts,—to propagation—conquest—trade—religion, hath received an accomplishment in every sense in which the words can be taken?—and this notwithstanding that each sense hath such limitations as no less require a certain determination of the course of the world, for the verification of the prediction, than if each sense had

respected one individual fact? I would not indeed deny, that without any superintendance of the world by Providence, events might sometimes so fall out as to correspond with a random conjecture of the human mind, or with the forged predictions of an impostor. But if the impostor's words should carry two meanings, the probability that they should be verified in one meaning or the other would indeed be much greater; but that they should prove true in both, the probability would be much less, than that of the accomplishment of a prediction of a single meaning. If the words, instead of two, should carry a variety of meanings, the improbability that they should prove true in all, would be heightened in a much greater proportion than any who are not versed in computation may easily be brought to apprehend. But the phenomenon which Noah's prophecy presents, if it be not a real prophecy brought by Providence to its completion, is that of a prediction of an immense extent and variety of meaning, which hath had the won-

derful good fortune to be verified in every branch. If this cannot be supposed to have happened without Providence, in the single instance of this prophecy, how much less in all the instances of prophecies of this sort which occur in holy writ? And if this could be conceived of all those prophecies, so far as they concern secular events, yet, let me ask, do we not find in every one of them, or at least in the far greater part, that some event of the Messiah's reign, or something characteristic of his time or person, makes one, and for the most part the most obvious of the various meanings? And is this too casual,—that such a variety of predictions as we find of this sort in the Bible, delivered in different ages, upon very different occasions, should be so framed, as all to bear upon one great object, the last of a succession, or the chief of an assortment of events, to which the images of each prediction are adapted with such wonderful art, that every one of them hath passed in its turn for the accomplishment? Should

you see the rays of the sun reflected from a system of polished planes, and transmitted through a variety of refractive surfaces, collect at last in a burning point, and there by their united action melt down the stubborn metal which resists the chemist's furnace, would you refer the wonderful effect to chance, rather than to an exquisite polish—to an accurate conformation and a just arrangement of the mirrors and the glasses? Would you not suppose that the skill of many artists had concurred to execute the different parts of the machine, under the direction of some man of far superior knowledge, by whom the properties of light and the laws of its reflections and refractions were understood, and by whom the effect which you had seen produced was originally intended? And can you suppose that it hath happened without design and contrivance, that the rays of the prophetic light are concentrated in a single point to illuminate a single object?

You will now recollect and apply the observation with which we entered upon this discussion,—that accident being once excluded from any share in the accomplishment, the evidence of a providence which these multiform prophecies afford is of the highest kind.

SERMON XVIII.

2 PETER, i. 20, 21.

"*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*"

FROM the digression which closed my last discourse, I now return to my principal subject; and shall immediately proceed to the last general topic I proposed to treat,—namely, to show that this same text of the apostle, which is so sure a guide to the sense of the prophecies, will also furnish a satisfactory answer to the most specious objection which the adversaries

of our most holy faith have ever been able to produce against that particular evidence of the truth of our Lord's pretensions, which arises from the supposed completion of the prophecies of the Old Testament in him and in his doctrines.

The objection, indeed, is nothing less than this,—that although the divine inspiration of the Jewish prophets be admitted, their prophecies will afford no support to our Lord's pretensions; for this reason, that in the application of these prophecies to him, and to the propagation of his doctrine, they are drawn by the writers of the New Testament to a sense in which they were never understood by the prophets themselves who delivered them: and since the true sense of any writing can be no other than that which the author intended to convey, and which was understood by him to be contained in the expressions which he thought proper to employ, an application of a prophecy in a sense not intended by the prophet must be a misinterpretation.

The assertion upon which this objection is founded, "that the first preachers of Christianity understood prophecies in one sense which were uttered in another," cannot altogether be denied; and, unless it could be denied in every instance, it is to little purpose to refute it, which might easily be done, in some: for if a single instance should remain, in which the apostles and evangelists should seem to have been guilty of a wilful misinterpretation of prophecy, or of an erroneous application of it, the credit of their doctrine would be greatly shaken, since a single instance of a fraud would fasten on them the imputation of dishonesty, and a single instance of mistake concerning the sense of the ancient Scriptures would invalidate their claim to inspiration. The truth, however, is, that though the fact upon which this objection is founded were as universally true as it is universally alleged,—which is not the case,—yet, were it so, we have in this text of the apostle a double answer to the adversary's argument, which is inconclusive, for

two reasons; first, because the assumption is false, that the prophets were the authors of their prophecies, "for the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and, secondly, were the assumption true, still the conclusion might not stand, "because no prophecy of holy writ is its own interpreter." I will endeavour to make you understand the propriety of both these answers, which at first perhaps may not strike you.

First, then, I say we deny the adversary's rash conclusion, though in part we grant his premises, because his assumption is false, that the prophets were the authors of their prophecies. The assumption is false, upon the principles upon which the adversary who urges this objection professes to dispute. He professes to dispute upon a concession of the divine inspiration of the Jewish prophets. But, if the prophets were inspired, they were not the authors of their prophecies;—the Holy Spirit of God was the author of every prophecy

or of every saying of a prophet, so far at least as it is prophetic; and the views of that Omniscient Spirit who gave the prophecy—not the surmises of the men whose faculties or whose organs that Spirit employed—are to be the standard of interpretation; and this upon that very principle which the adversary alleges,—that the meaning of every book, and of every sentence in the book, is its author's meaning.

To explain this more distinctly, I must observe, that all prophecy is speech, in which the prophet is made to express ideas of the Divine Mind, in uttering his own; and the prophecies of holy writ are divisible into two different kinds, distinguished by two different manners, in which this utterance of the mind of God by the mouth of the prophet was usually effected. The first kind consisted in a scene allegorically descriptive of futurity, which was displayed to the imagination of the prophet, who was left to paint the images excited in his phantasy in such language as his natural talents of poetical

description might supply. Of this kind are the prophecies delivered by Jacob and by Moses, not long before their death—the prophecies of Balaam, and many that occur in the writings of those who were prophets by profession. The other kind consists merely in verbal allusions, when the prophet, speaking perhaps of himself or of his own times, or of distant events set clearly in his view, was directed by the inspiring Spirit to the choice of expressions to which later events have been found to correspond with more exactness than those to which the prophet himself applied them. This kind of prophecy particularly abounds in the Psalms of David, who often speaks of the fortunes of his own life, the difficulties with which he had to struggle, and his providential deliverances, in terms which carry only a figurative meaning as applied to David himself, but are literally descriptive of the most remarkable occurrences in the holy life of Jesus. Nor is this kind of prophecy unfrequent in the writings of the other pro-

phets; who were often made to allude to the general redemption, when they would speak in the most explicit terms of deliverances of the Jewish people; and were seldom permitted to deplore present calamities, or to denounce impending judgments, but in expressions literally descriptive of the sufferings of Christ and the afflictions of his church.

In both kinds of prophecy, the Spirit of God and the mind of man had each its proper part. In prophecies of the first kind, the *matter* was furnished by the Spirit of God, and the language only is the man's. In these prophecies we often find a double obscurity, of which one part is to be imputed to the man, and arises from the concise and broken manner in which he utters his conceptions. Carried away by the strength of the images presented to him, the prophet seems often to forget that his hearers were not apprized of what was passing in his own fancy: he addresses them upon the subject of what he sees, as joint spectators of the interesting scene, in brief allusions,

and in animated remarks upon the most striking parts, rather than in a just and cool description of the whole. Now, this obscurity may indeed be best removed by inquiring the prophet's meaning—by collecting, from his abrupt hints and oblique intimations, what might be the entire picture exhibited to his mind. But, when this is sufficiently understood, another obscurity, arising from the matter of the prophecy, may yet remain. The mystic sense couched under the allegorical images may yet be hidden; and for clearing this difficulty, on which the real interpretation of the prophecy, as prophecy, depends, it may be to little purpose to inquire or to know what meaning the prophet might affix to the images he saw, unless it were certain that the prophet was so far in the secret of Heaven as to know of what particular events these images were designed to be the emblems. But this, it is certain, he could not know but by a second inspiration, of which there is no evidence,—by an operation of the Divine Spirit on the man's

understanding, which might enable him to decypher the allegorical scenery which his imagination had been made to conceive: for, that the sight of the picture should be accompanied with any natural discernment of its mystic meaning, is no more necessary than that a waking man's recollection of his dream should be accompanied with a clear understanding of its signification; the reverse of which we know to have been the case in ancient times, when prophetic dreams were not unfrequent. The dreamer could describe every particular of his dream, but, for the meaning of it, 'twas necessary he should have recourse to other persons with whom the gift of interpretation was deposited; and had God been pleased to withhold this gift, a prophetic dream would have had no interpretation antecedent to its completion, and yet, by the completion, would have been understood to be prophetic. Now, what is a dream which is distinctly remembered, and not at all understood, but one instance of a prophetic vision, of which the sense is unknown to

the prophet? In prophecies, therefore, of this first kind, there is no reason to suppose that the prophet's meaning was the whole meaning of the inspiring Spirit; but there is the greatest reason from analogy for the contrary conclusion.

In prophecies of the second kind, the whole matter is from the mind of the man, but the language is from the Divine Spirit; and, in this case, the immediate action of the Spirit seems to have been upon the memory of the prophet, which was directed to suggest words, phrases, and similitudes, which, at the same time that they were strongly expressive of the prophet's thoughts, were still more nicely adapted to the private meaning of the inspiring Spirit. Now, in this, as in the former instance, the first step towards the understanding of the prophecy is to settle what was the meaning of the prophet. But still this may be understood, and the meaning of the Divine Spirit remain a secret; for in this, as in the former case, 'twas impossible the prophet should be apprized of the Spirit's

meaning, without a second operation on another faculty of his mind, by which it might be impowered to discern those future events within the view of the Omniscient Spirit, to which the expressions in which he clothed his own thoughts might be applicable. But of this second act of the Spirit, for the private information of the prophet, no evidence appears.

Upon the whole, prophecy of either kind was the joint production of two intellects, of very different and unequal powers. In this, therefore, as in every instance where more than single intellect is concerned, a design and meaning may reasonably be ascribed to the superior understanding, which contrives and directs, not imparted to the inferior, which obeys and executes;—just as, in any book, the meaning of the author may be little understood by the corrector of the press, and not at all by the founder of the types. And yet the disparities of understanding between the wisest and most learned author, and the most ignorant of the mechanics whose manual art and industry

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must concur in the publication of his labours, —the disparity between the wisest man and the humblest of his instruments, is nothing in comparison of that which must be confessed to subsist between the two intellects which have concurred in the publication of the prophetic word.

Here, then, is one answer which the apostle furnishes to this specious objection, "that the prophecies of the Old Testament are misinterpreted by the writers of the New; being taken in senses in which the authors of those prophecies, the prophets, never understood them." The prophets, says the apostle, were not the authors of their prophecies, any more than a scribe is the author of the discourse which he takes down from the mouth of a speaker. "For the propheey came not at any time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

This first answer is, however, an answer to the objector rather than to the objection; since it goes no farther than to prove that the ad-

versary's argument is inconclusive: and as it hath happened to many to fail in the proof of true propositions, through want of skill or circumspection in the framing of their arguments, it may perhaps be supposed that this may have happened to our adversary in the present question. It may be said, in defence of the opinion he sustains, that though every author must be allowed to understand his own writings, it is not to be allowed that no writing is to be understood by any but the author of it. Though the principle, therefore, may be false, upon which our adversary would conclude that the prophets had of all men the clearest understanding of their prophecies, the reverse is not immediately to be concluded—that any other men have had a clearer understanding of them. It is possible, it may be said, that the prophets might enjoy a clear foresight of the events to which their predictions were intended to allude, as some men have had the gift of interpreting their own dreams; and that, if this was the fact, which

may seem no unnatural supposition, the consequence still must be, that no meaning that may be affixed to any prophecy may be the true one, that was not within the comprehension of the prophet's mind. Now, we will allow the adversary to amend his assumption, and to reform his argument;—we will allow him to assume, that the full meaning of every prophecy was clearly understood by the prophet who uttered it. We shall, in the course of our argument, find a proper place to show that this assumption is false, and all consequences built upon it at the best precarious. But, for the present, we grant this assumption, with every consequence that may fairly be deduced from it. We must therefore grant (what we hold, indeed, to be false; but for the present we must grant it) that nothing may be a true completion of a prophecy which was not foreseen by the prophet. Still we feel ourselves at liberty to maintain that the adversary's argument, with all this emendation on his part, and with all this concession on our own, hath no connexion

with the particular conclusion against the first preachers of Christianity; because he has not proved—because he could not prove, without retracting that very assumption on which his whole argument depends—because the thing is incapable of proof upon any principles which an infidel granting the divine inspiration of the Jewish prophets can admit,—their inspiration being granted, it is incapable of proof, otherwise than by the authority of the later Scriptures, that those very meanings which the writers of the New Testament affix to the ancient prophecies might not be in the minds of the prophets, though they are not obvious in their words. The proof of this assertion rests upon the apostle's maxim, that "no prophecy of Scripture is of self-interpretation;" or, to state the same thing affirmatively, that the sense of prophecy is to be sought in the events of the world, and in the harmony of the prophetic writings, rather than in the bare terms of any single prediction.

The apostle asserts that all the Scripture prophecies are purposely so conceived as not to be of self-interpretation. He intimates that it was a part of the scheme of Providence, that prophecy should be so delivered as to have to fetch its interpretation from the consistence of the prophetic system, and from the events of the world. I do not insist upon the authority of the apostle;—I know that this is nothing with the adversary: but I persuade myself you will recollect, that in a former discourse, in which I opened the connexion between the apostle's maxim and the facts on which he builds it, I proved, from the end to which prophecy, if it comes from God, must unquestionably be directed, and from the wisdom with which the means of Providence must ever be adapted to their ends,—I proved to you, not from any man's authority, but from these plain and general principles of natural religion, namely, that God is good and wise, that his ends ever are the best, and his means the most fitting and convenient,—I proved to you, from

such plain principles as these, acknowledged by Deists no less than by Christians, that if prophecy be really of divine original, that mysterious disguise by which the events of remote futurity (such, at least, as depend on the free actions of men) may be kept almost as much concealed as if prophecy had never been given, must be a part of the original contrivance. Hence it follows, that whatever private information the prophet might enjoy, the Spirit of God would never permit him to disclose the ultimate intent and particular meaning of the prophecy in the bare terms of the prediction. I ask, then, by what means we may discover that any particular meaning which may seem to suit with the prediction was not in the prophet's mind, when it is proved, that although it had been in the prophet's mind he would not have been permitted to declare it. By what means doth the adversary pretend to show that the applications of the ancient prophecies which are made by the evangelists were never intended

or foreseen by the prophets, but by showing that no such intention appears in the terms of any prediction, considered in connexion with the occasion upon which it was delivered, the circumstances in which the prophet might be who uttered it, and the persons to whom it was addressed? But where is the force of this conclusion,—"The apostle's sense of the prophecy is not to be found in the terms of the prediction; therefore it was not in the prophet's mind?" Where is the force of this conclusion, if the mind of the prophet, possessed of that sense, would nevertheless be irresistibly determined, by the impulse of the Almighty Spirit, to envelop the perceived sense in an enigma, which should remain inexplicable till the time for the accomplishment should draw near? And this must have been the case, if the prophet was privy to the intent of his prophecy, and the Holy Spirit of God was really his inspirer. Our adversary would prove that the ancient prophecies, though allowed to be divine, give no countenance to the pretensions of our Lord;

and his boasted proof is this: "Your first teachers," he says to Christians, "have taught you to misinterpret these prophecies, in applying them to your pretended Messiah; for they adopt a mode of interpretation which you must confess to be inapplicable, unless the divine inspiration of the prophets be admitted." The argument is no less incoherent and infirm than it is base and insidious, which is built, like this, on an occult retractation of what the disputant, in drawing his own state of the controversy, professes to concede.

Thus you see, that though the general principle should be admitted, that the true meaning of a prophecy cannot be unknown to the prophet, yet the particular conclusion, that the prophecies of the Old Testament have been misapplied by the writers of the New, hath no connexion with these general premises. Although the general maxim could be proved to be true, the particular conclusion might nevertheless be false. And now we may safely advance a step farther, and say that this conclu-

sion is proved to be actually false, by the evident agreement of the particulars of the gospel history with the prophecies which have been applied to them, and by the mutual harmony and consistence of the prophecies so interpreted; since, whatever might be in the mind of the prophet or his contemporaries, a manifest correspondence and agreement between the particulars of an event and the images of a prophecy is in all cases a complete evidence that this prophecy was predictive of this event, provided the prophecy so applied be consistent with the general purport of the system. The authority of this evidence is so decisive, that the private opinion of the prophet, could it in any case be clearly ascertained, must give way to it. If the prophet, in any case, pretended to form a conjecture concerning the ultimate intention of his prophecies, his judgment must still bow down to time, as a more informed expositor;—and this is an immediate consequence of that disguise of prophecy which renders it inexplicable but by time, and which

hath been shown to arise from the attributes of the Deity. Our adversary, therefore, has employed his learning and his logic to his own confusion: he has brought himself into a disgraceful and unpleasant situation, for a man who asserts with confidence, and would affect solidity of argument. The senses of the ancient prophecies, which he rejects because he supposes them to have been unknown to the prophets, he cannot prove to have been unknown to them; and, if he could prove this, still the conclusion, upon principles which in his assumed character of a Deist he cannot but admit,—the conclusion still must be for ignorance in the prophet, rather than error or fraud in the apostles. And this was indeed the case. The inspired prophets had not always a distinct foresight of the particular events in which their prophecies were to receive their ultimate accomplishment;—not but that the prophets and the earliest patriarchs had indeed an expectation full of joy—a glorious hope of a deliverance of mankind from

the ruin of the fall, and the later prophets understood that the deliverance was to be effected by a descendant of the royal stock of David; but, of the particulars of our Saviour's life—of the particular doctrines he was to teach—of the particular sufferings he was to undergo—of the means by which the true religion was to be propagated,—of these things they had no distinct and particular foreknowledge. That they had it not, is implied in the text; but it is more explicitly affirmed by St Peter, in his first epistle. "Of which salvation"—*i. e.* of the salvation of the souls of men, purchased by our Lord Christ Jesus,—"of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Here, you see, is an explicit assertion that the particulars of the gospel dispensation, testified by the Spi-

rit of Christ, the Omniscient Spirit of the Father and the Son, which was in the prophets, were matters of anxious search and diligent inquiry to the spirit of the prophet. But what is once known and clearly understood is no longer an object of inquiry and search to him who knows and understands it. By the prophets, therefore, who inquired and searched diligently after that salvation of which they prophesied, the true sense of their own prophecies was but imperfectly understood.

And this circumstance, the confessed ignorance of the prophets concerning the issue of their prophecies, is that which gives the testimony that prophecy affords of the wise and powerful providence of God its peculiar weight; for the evidence of prophecy lies in these two particulars,—that events have been predicted which were not within human foresight; and the accomplishments of predictions have been brought about, which much surpass human power and contrivance. The prediction, therefore, was not from man's sagacity

nor the event from man's will and design; and then the goodness of the end, and the intricacy of the contrivance, complete the proof that the whole is of God. But, if it appeared that the events had been foreseen by the prophets, a very important branch of the argument, the exclusion of human foresight, would be rendered very precarious. The infidel, in that case, would have said, "The plain fact is, that these events were foreseen by men. You tell us, indeed," he would say to the advocates of revelation, "that this foresight came from a preternatural illumination of their minds; but this is a mere hypothesis of your own, which you set up because it best serves your purpose. All that appears is, that these men did foresee these events. On what principle their power of foresight might depend, is matter of doubtful inquiry. Why should it rather be referred to some inexplicable intercourse of a superior mind with the human, than to a certain faculty originally inherent in the minds of those particular men, the use of which might be no less

easy and natural to them, than the use of a more limited faculty of foresight, and the ordinary talent of conjecture, is to you? Are not men very unequal in all their endowments? And this being once allowed, is it not reasonable to suppose of any faculty or power which a man is seen to exercise, that he possesses it as his own, in that degree in which he is seen to exercise it. The prophet's foresight, therefore, of the things he did foresee, was natural to him. And why," the infidel would add, "why should it be doubted but that man hath powers to effect what the human mind hath power to prognosticate." To such objections, the evidence from prophecy would indeed have been obnoxious, had the prophets shown a clear foreknowledge of the full intent and meaning of their prophecies; but the case being the reverse,—since the events which best correspond with the prophecies, and put the system of prophecy most in harmony with itself, were neither foreseen by the prophets nor by any other men till they had actually taken place, or till

such things had taken place as at the same time brought these accomplishments within the reach of human foresight and put it beyond the reach of human power to prevent them, there can be no ground for these extravagant claims in favour of man's sagacity to predict, or of his power to accomplish. Had the case been otherwise, the divine inspiration of the prophets might still, indeed, have been an object of probable opinion and rational faith; but it becomes as much more certain, when the ignorance of the prophet notoriously appears, as the consequence of a known fact or self-evident truth is more certain than any conclusion from the most plausible hypothesis.

I have now discussed the various points of doctrine that my text suggested. You have seen that it confutes those vain pretensions to an infallible authority of interpretation, which its meaning hath been perverted to support. You have seen that it furnishes rules by which the private Christian may be enabled to interpret the prophecies of Scripture for himself.

You have seen that these rules are of extensive use, and ready application. You have seen, that, by virtue of that peculiar structure which brings them under these rules of interpretation, the most multiform of the Scripture prophecies do equally with the most simple afford a positive evidence of God's providential government of the world. And, lastly, you have seen, that, from this same text of the apostle, the most specious objection which infidels have ever been able to produce against the argument from prophecy in support of the Christian revelation, receives a double answer,—one from the fact upon which the apostle builds his maxim of interpretation, the other from the maxim itself,—the first defeating the objector's argument, the other establishing the opposite of his conclusion. Nothing now remains, but briefly to obviate a question which many who have attended to these discourses may, perhaps with the best intentions, wish to put,—whether these rules of interpretation, which we have taken so much pains to explain

and to establish, are sufficient to clear the prophetic writings, to popular apprehension, of all obscurity. Length of time, by the changes which it makes in the customs and manners of mankind, on which the figures of speech depend, and by various other means, brings an obscurity on the most perspicuous writings. Among all the books now extant, none hath suffered more from this cause, in its original perspicuity, than the Bible; nor hath any part of the Bible suffered equally with the prophetic books, in particular passages: but, notwithstanding the great and confessed obscurity of particular parts of the prophecies, those which immediately concern the Christian church are for the most part, so far at least as they are already accomplished, abundantly perspicuous, or incumbered with no other difficulty than the apostle's rules of exposition will remove; nor does the obscurity of other parts at all lessen the certainty of the evidence which these afford. The obscurity, therefore, of the prophecies, great as it is in certain parts, is not

such, upon the whole, as should discourage the Christian laic from the study of them, nor such as will excuse him under the neglect of it. Let him remember, that it is not mine, but the apostle's admonition, who would not enjoin an useless or impracticable task, "to give heed to the prophetic word."

SERMON XIX.

MATTHEW, xvi. 21.

From that time forth, began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

THE saying of the prophet, that "the ways and thoughts of God are not like those of men," was never more remarkably verified than in that great event which we this day commemorate, the death and passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness!" Wonderful in every part, but chiefly in the last acts of it, was the scheme of man's

redemption! That the author of life should himself be made subject unto death—that the Lord of glory should be clothed with shame—that the Son of God's love should become a curse for sinful man—that his sufferings and humiliation should be made the manifestation of his glory—that by stooping to death he should conquer death—that the cross should lift him to his throne—that the height of human malice should but accomplish the purposes of God's mercy—that the Devil, in the persecutions he raised against our Lord, should be the instrument of his own final ruin,—these were mysteries in the doctrine of the cross, so contrary to the confirmed prejudices of the Jewish people, and so far above the reach of philosophical investigation, that they rendered the preaching of a crucified Saviour "a stumblingblock to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness." God foreseeing how improbable this doctrine would appear to men, was pleased in various ways to typify and predict our Saviour's passion, ages before it happened, that

the thing, when it should come to pass, might be known to be his work and counsel; and our Lord himself omitted not, at the proper season, to give his disciples the most explicit warning of it, that an event so contrary to every thing they had expected (for they were involved in the common error of the Jewish nation concerning the Messiah) might not come upon them by surprise. "From that time forth," saith the evangelist, "Jesus began to show to his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

"From that time forth."—The fact last mentioned was that conversation of our Lord with his disciples, in which Peter declared, in the name of all, that while the people in general were in doubt who Jesus might be—whether Elias, or Jeremias, or some other of the ancient prophets revived—they, his constant followers, believed him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. "From that time forth,"

it seems, and not before, Jesus began to advertise his disciples of his approaching death. It was a thing not to be disclosed till their faith had attained to some degree of constancy and firmness; but when once it appeared that they not only esteemed and loved their Master as a wise and virtuous man—that they not only revered him as an inspired teacher of righteousness, but that they believed in him as the Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of Israel, it then became seasonable to remove the prejudices in which they had been educated, and to show them plainly what that deliverance was which the promised Messiah was to work,—for whom, and by what means, it was to be effected. It was time to extinguish their hopes of sharing in the splendours of an earthly kingdom, and to prepare and fortify their minds against all that "contradiction of sinners" which they, with their Master, were in this world destined to endure. *Now*, therefore, he begins to show them how that he *must* go to Jerusalem, and, after much malicious persecu-

tion from the leaders of the Jewish people, he *must* be killed. The form of expression here is very remarkable in the original; and it is well preserved in our English translation. He *must* go—he *must* suffer—he *must* be killed—he *must* be raised again on the third day,—all these things were fixed and determined—must inevitably be—nothing could prevent them; and yet the greater part of them were of a kind that might *seem* to depend entirely upon *man's* free agency. To go or not to go to Jerusalem was in his own power; and the persecution he met with there, arising from the folly and the malice of ignorant and wicked men, surely depended upon human will: yet, by the form of the sentence, these things are included under the same necessity of event as that which was evidently an immediate effect of divine power, without the concurrence of any other cause, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The words which in the original express the *going*—the *suffering*—the *being killed*—the *being raised again*—are all equally

subject to the verb which answers to the word *must* of our language, and in its first and proper meaning predicates necessity. As he *must* be raised on the third day, so he *must* go, he *must* suffer, he *must* be killed.' 'Every one of these events, his going to Jerusalem, his suffering, and his death there—and that these sufferings and that death should be brought about by the malice of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes,—every one of these things is plainly announced, as no less unalterably fixed than the resurrection of our Saviour, or the time of his resurrection—that it was to happen on the third day.

The previous certainty of things to come is one of those truths which are not easily comprehended. The difficulty seems to arise from a habit that we have of measuring all intellectual powers by the standard of human intellect. There is nothing in the nature of certainty, abstractedly considered, to connect it with past time or with the present, more than with the future; but human knowledge ex-

tends in so small a degree to future things, that scarce any thing becomes certain to *us* till it is come to pass, and therefore we are apt to imagine that things *acquire* their certainty *from* their accomplishment. But this is a gross fallacy. The proof of an event to us always depends either upon the testimony of others or the evidence of our own senses; but the certainty of events in themselves arises from their natural connexion with their proper causes. Hence, to that great Being who knows things, not by testimony—not by sense, but by their causes, as being himself the First Cause, the source of power and activity to all other causes,—to Him, every thing that shall ever be, is at all times infinitely more certain than any thing either past or present can be to any man, except perhaps the simple fact of his own existence, and some of those necessary truths which are evidenced to every man, not by his bodily senses, but by that internal perception which seems to be the first act of created intellect.

This certainty, however, is to be carefully distinguished from a true *necessity* inherent in the nature of the thing. A thing is *necessary* when the idea of existence is included in the idea of the thing as an inseparable part of it. Thus, God is necessary;—the mind cannot think of him at all without thinking of him as existent. The very notion and name of an *event* excludes this necessity, which belongs only to things uncaused. The events of the created universe are *certain*, because sufficient causes *do*, not because they *must*, act to their production. God *knows* this certainty, because he knows the action of all these causes, inasmuch as he himself begins it, and perfectly comprehends those mutual connexions between the things he hath created, which render *this* a cause, and *that* its effect.

But the mere certainty of things to come, including in it even human actions, is not all that is implied in the terms of our Lord's prediction; which plainly intimate that the actions of men, even their worst actions, are in

some measure comprised in the design of Providence, who, although he wills not the evil of any single act, undoubtedly wills the good in which the whole system of created agency shall ultimately terminate.

On these views of things, and in particular on our Saviour's prediction of his sufferings, in which these views are most strongly set forth, the Calvinistic divines endeavoured to establish their hard doctrine of arbitrary predestination,—a doctrine to which, whether we consider it in itself, or in its consequences, we may with good reason apply the words of the prophet, "It hath truly little form or comeliness—little beauty, that we should desire it." But let us not judge uncharitably of those who maintained it, nor ascribe to a morose severity of temper, much less to spiritual pride, what is easily traced to nobler principles. The Calvinistic predestinarians had found in the Scriptures, both of the Old and of the New Testament, the most explicit assertions of God's omniscience, and of his constant attention to

the minutest occurrences both of the natural and of the moral world. These notions they found agreeable, we must not say to philosophy (for of that these pious men had but a scanty portion), but to what in many cases is a better guide—to the natural sense and feeling of a virtuous mind. The belief that the world, and they themselves as a part of it, were under the immediate care and protection of the wisest and the best of beings, had taken possession of their honest hearts more firmly than it seems to do of some men's understandings; and they set themselves to combat with the fiercest zeal, and without any scrupulous examination, every doctrine that might seem to contradict it, and threaten to rob them of the holy joy and comfort which flowed from that persuasion. They did not understand that the foreknowledge and providence of the Deity, and that liberty which doth truly belong to man as a moral agent, are things perfectly consistent and naturally connected;—they did not hesitate a moment to deny the freedom of human actions. But this

was a dangerous error; for, in truth, the proof of our liberty is to every individual of the human race the very same, I am persuaded, with the proof of his existence. I *feel* that I *exist*, and I *feel* that I am *free*; and I may with reason turn a deaf ear upon every argument that can be alleged in either case to disprove my feelings. I feel that I have power to flee the danger that I dread—to pursue the pleasure that I covet—to forego the most inviting pleasure, although it be actually within my grasp, if I apprehend that the present enjoyment may be the means of future mischief—to expose myself to present danger, to submit to present evils, in order to secure the possession of a future good;—I feel that I have power to do the action I approve—to abstain from another that my conscience would condemn;—in a word, I feel that I act from my own hopes, my own fears, my own internal perceptions of moral fitnesses and discongruities. Happy, thrice happy they who act invariably by these perceptions! They have attained to the "glo-

rious liberty of the sons of God!". But whenever I act from other motives, I feel that I am misled by my own passions, my own appetites, my own mistaken views of things. A feeling always succeeds these unreasonable actions, that, had my mind exerted its natural powers, in considering the action I was about to do—the propriety of it in itself and its consequences, I might and I should have acted otherwise. Having these feelings, I feel all that liberty which renders the morality of a man's actions properly his own, and makes him justly accountable for his conduct.

The liberty, therefore, of man, and the foreknowledge and providence of God, are equally certain, although the proof of each rests on different principles. Our feelings prove to every one of us that we are free: reason and revelation teach us that the Deity knows and governs all things,—that even "the thoughts of man he understandeth long before,"—long before the thoughts arise—long before the man himself is born who is to think them. Now,

when two distinct propositions are separately proved, each by its proper evidence, it is not a reason for denying either, that the human mind, upon the first hasty view, imagines a repugnance, and may perhaps find a difficulty in connecting them, even after the distinct proof of each is clearly perceived and understood. There is a wide difference between a paradox and a contradiction. Both, indeed, consist of two distinct propositions; and so far only are they alike: for, of the two parts of a contradiction, the one or the other must necessarily be false,—of a paradox, both are often true, and yet, when proved to be true, may continue paradoxical. This is the necessary consequence of our partial views of things. An intellect to which nothing should be paradoxical would be infinite. It may naturally be supposed that paradoxes must abound the most in metaphysics and divinity, "for who can find out God unto perfection?"—yet they occur in other subjects; and any one who should universally refuse his assent to propositions separately proved, be-

cause when connected they may seem paradoxical, would, in many instances, be justly laughed to scorn by the masters of those sciences which make the highest pretensions to certainty and demonstration. In all these cases, there is generally in the nature of things a limit to each of the two contrasted propositions, beyond which neither can be extended without implying the falsehood of the other, and changing the paradox into a contradiction; and the whole difficulty of perceiving the connexion and agreement between such propositions arises from this circumstance, that, by some inattention of the mind, these limits are overlooked. Thus, in the case before us, we must not imagine such an arbitrary exercise of God's power over the minds and wills of subordinate agents, as should convert rational beings into mere machines, and leave the Deity charged with the follies and the crimes of men,—which was the error of the Calvinists; nor must we, on the other hand, set up such a liberty of created beings, as,

necessarily precluding the Divine foreknowledge of human actions, should take the government of the moral world out of the hands of God, and leave him nothing to do with the noblest part of his creation,—which hath been, perhaps, the worse error of some who have opposed the Calvinists.

There is yet another error upon this subject, which, I think, took its rise among professed infidels; and to them, till of late, it hath been entirely confined. But some have appeared among its modern advocates, actuated, I am persuaded (for their writings on this subject witness it), by the same humble spirit of resigned devotion which gave birth to the plan of arbitrary predestination. Deeply versed in physics, which the Calvinists neglected, these men wish to reconcile the notions of God's arbitrary dominion, which they in common with the Calvinists maintain, with what the others entirely overlooked, the regular operation of second causes: and in this circumstance lies the chief, if not the whole difference, between

the philosophical necessity of our subtle moderns and the predestination of their more simple ancestors. And so far as these necessarians maintain the certain influence of moral motives, as the natural and sufficient means whereby human actions, and even human thoughts, are brought into that continued chain of causes and effects, which, taking its beginning in the operations of the Infinite Mind, cannot but be fully understood by him, —so far they do service to the cause of truth; placing the "great and glorious" doctrines of foreknowledge and providence,—absolute foreknowledge—universal providence, upon a firm and philosophical foundation;—a thing to be wished with respect to every doctrine of any practical importance, whenever, as in this case, the great obscurity of the subject renders the interpretation of texts of Scripture dubious, which otherwise, taken as they ought to be, in the plainest and the most natural meaning of the words, might be decisive. But when they go beyond this,—when they would

represent this influence of moral motives as arising from a physical necessity, the very same with that which excites and governs the motions of the inanimate creation, here they confound Nature's distinctions, and contradict the very principles they would seem to have established. The source of their mistake is this, that they imagine a similitude between things which admit of no comparison—between the influence of a moral motive upon mind, and that of mechanical force upon matter. A moral motive and a mechanical force are both indeed causes, and equally certain causes each of its proper effect; but they are causes in very different senses of the word, and derive their energy from the most opposite principles. Force is only another name for an *efficient* cause; it is that which impresses motion upon body, the passive recipient of a foreign impulse. A moral motive is what is more significantly called the *final* cause, and can have no influence but with a being that proposes to itself an end, chooses means, and thus *puts it-*

self in action. It is true, that while *this* is my *end,* and while I conceive *these* to be the *means,* a definite act will as certainly follow that definite choice and judgment of my mind, provided I be free from all external restraint and impediment, as a determinate motion will be excited in a body by a force applied in a given direction. There is in both cases an equal certainty of the effect; but the principle of the certainty in the one case and in the other is entirely different, which difference necessarily arises from the different nature of final and efficient causes. Every cause, except it be the will of the Deity acting to the first production of substances,—every cause, I say, except this acting in this singular instance, produces its effect by acting *upon* something; and, whatever be the cause that acts, the principle of certainty lies in a capacity, in the thing on which it acts, of being affected by that action. Now, the capacity which force, or an efficient cause, requires in the object of its action, is absolute inertness. But intelligence and liberty consti-

tute the capacity of being influenced by a final cause—by a moral motive: and to this very liberty does this sort of cause owe its whole efficacy—the whole certainty of its operation; which certainty never can disprove the existence of that liberty upon which it is itself founded, and of which it affords the highest evidence.

These distinctions between the efficient and the final cause being once understood, we may from the necessarian's own principles deduce the firmest proof of the liberty of man: for, since God foreknows and governs future events, so far as subordinate agents are concerned in them, by the means of moral motives, that is, by final causes,—since these are the engines by which he turns and wields the intellectual world, bending the perverse wills of wicked men and of apostate spirits to his purpose,—and since these motives owe their energy—their whole success, to the liberty of the beings that are governed by them, it is in consequence most certain, however it may seem most strange, that God could not govern the world as he

does, by final causes, if man were not free, no more than he could govern the material part of it mechanically, by efficient causes, if matter were not wholly passive. The necessarian does not listen to this argument. He has furnished himself with an expedient to make room for the physical necessity he would introduce into what has been called the moral world. His expedient is neither more nor less than this, that he would annihilate the moral world altogether: he denies the existence of the immaterial principle in man, and would stamp the very form of human intellect, that living image of the Divinity, upon the passive substance of the brain! It seems, the notion of an active principle distinct from the body, the true cause of voluntary motion, possessing in itself the faculties of thought, desire, volition, and necessarily surviving the body, which principle should much more truly than the body constitute the man,—all this was a phantom of heathen philosphy, which a Christian, for that reason in particular, should discard. It is a

new kind of argument against the truth of a proposition which a man might otherwise be disposed to receive, that it hath been asserted and maintained by wise and good and learned men, who had spent a great part of their lives in thinking most intensely upon the subject. This is a *new way* of managing the topic of authorities. When in the ardour of controversy a man alleges such an argument as this, he is seldom perhaps aware how little he is himself in earnest in it—how nugatory it would appear to him in any other but that particular instance wherein it happens to serve his purpose—how absurd, were it once turned against him. That acute writer who would expunge the doctrine of an immaterial soul and its immortality from the creed of a Christian, because many who were destitute of the assistances of revelation were brought by the mere light of nature to believe it, does not, I am well persuaded, the less firmly believe the being and the providence of God, because in that belief he happens to concur with Socrates and Plato.

Let us, however, turn to a meditation more adapted to this holy season. Let the pious Christian in every thing look up to God, with full assurance of faith, as to the first mover and cause of all things, the director of all events, the vigilant guardian and omnipotent protector of the virtuous: but let him no less firmly believe, that the morality of his actions is his own,—that he is free to stand and free to fall, —that if he fall, the blame is with himself, in his own foolish choice; God is blameless.

According to this state of things, in which every thing is subject to the wise controul of God, and human actions, and even the liberty of human actions, are constituent parts of the wonderfully complex scheme of Providence,— according to this state of things, so evidently implied in our Saviour's prediction of his sufferings, every thing fell out in exact agreement, not only with this prediction, but also with the ancient predictions of the Jewish prophets, and with the still more ancient types of the Mosaic law; and yet every thing was

brought about by the ordinary operation of second causes, and in great part by the free agency of man. At the season of the passover, our blessed Lord, whose present condition of humanity imposed upon him an implicit obedience to the positive precepts of the Mosaic law (which law was not yet abolished), was carried by motives of devotion to Jerusalem. The chief priests and scribes assembled with the elders in the hall of Caiphas the high-priest, to concert the safest measures of destroying him. These men, in consideration of their worldly interests, had reason to dread the success of our Saviour's doctrine. There was nothing against which he had waged more constant war, than that system of hypocrisy and superstition by which they had disfigured the true religion, and had enslaved the minds of the simple multitude. He had studiously improved every occasion of insisting upon the futility of their traditions, the vanity of their ceremonies, the insincerity of their devotion—of exposing their ignorance, their pride, their

ambition, their avarice. Motives of interest and revenge suggested the resolution, in this infernal assembly, of seizing the holy Jesus, and of putting him to death. A party of their officers and servants was sent immediately to execute the first part of the horrid purpose. Motives of avarice had prevailed upon the sordid mind of Judas to conspire with his master's enemies against his life. For a paltry bribe of something less than four pounds—for the sum that the law appointed for damages to the owner of a slave who had been killed accidentally by another man's ox, he conducts the officers of the great council to the accustomed place of our Lord's retirement, where Jesus was at this time withdrawn to prepare himself, by prayer and meditation, against that trying hour which he knew to be approaching.

Let us once more recur to the words of our Lord's prediction,—instructive words, upon which we never can too deeply meditate. He *must* go—he *must* suffer—he *must* be killed. Whence, and what was this necessity?—Assu-

redly no *absolute* necessity originally seated in the nature of the thing, that the Son of God should suffer;—he *might* have left the miserable race of man to perish in their sins. The Son is in all things, but in nothing more than in love and mercy, the express image of the Father. Notwithstanding all that man could plead in extenuation of his transgression (and somewhat he *had* to plead,—the frailty of his nature—the subtilty of the tempter), yet the purposes of God's moral government rendered it unfit to pardon sin without intercession and atonement. Compassion instigates the Son of God to pay the forfeit of our crimes, and to satisfy, in his own person, the Eternal Father's justice. Impelled by *this* necessity, incited by commiseration of our fallen state, he lays aside the glory "which he had with the Father before the world began." In the virgin's womb he clothes himself with flesh; and, together with that mortal clothing, he assumes man's perfect nature,—a nature subject to our wants and to our pains, not insensible to

our enjoyments, susceptible, as appeared in many actions of his life, of our social attachments, and though pure from the stain of sin, not exempt from the feeling of temptation. When his hour draws near, this human nature shrinks under the apprehension of pain;—he foresees the accumulated horror of his approaching sufferings,—he foresees it with distress and agony. Where is the wise disputer of the world who says that pain and affliction are not evils?—who, sufficient to himself, indifferent to things external, boasts that he would be unmoved in calamity, at ease in torment? Bring him to Gethsemane: there shall he see a just man and perfect—a man whose conscience reproaches him with no vice or folly—a man whose life hath been piety and love, unaffected piety, disinterested love—a man in whose ample mind are hidden all the treasures of knowledge—a man assuredly entitled to every comfort which the consciousness of perfection, of perfect virtue and of perfect wisdom, can bestow,—he shall see this wise,

this good, this perfect man, this man in union with Divinity, overwhelmed with grief and tribulation. "Surely he bears our griefs, he carries our sorrows, he undergoes the chastisement of our peace." See his mortified looks, his troubled gestures! See the bloody sweat! strange symptom of the unuttered pangs that rend his righteous heart. See him prostrate on the earth in anxious supplication. Humble thyself, O vain philosophy! dismiss thy arrogant maxims: learn from this affecting spectacle a better wisdom than thine own;—learn it of him who brought it from above. Say not that affliction is not an evil: say that it is to be borne with humility, as the punishment of sin—to be endured with fortitude, as the instrument of good—to be accepted with thankfulness, as the discipline of God, whereby he trains his sons to virtue, and fits the virtuous for glory; but confess that it is that which the most perfect natures do the most abhor,—that which it is the wisdom of man,

with due submission to the dispensations of Providence, to shun.

Our Saviour, in the anguish of his soul, but with perfect resignation to the Father's will, prays that, if possible, the cup of bitterness may pass by him. The counsels of God are founded on unerring wisdom; they cannot be reversed or changed. The awful sentence is gone forth, "Without blood there is no remission!" "Awake, O sword! against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." Love to man, joined with a zeal for the honour and support of the Father's government,—these motives, which first engaged him in the painful work of our redemption, prevail over his human feelings; and farther fortified by a vision from heaven, he determines to meet the malice of his enemies; and when the officers of the Sanhedrim appear with Judas at their head, he summons not those legions of angels which were ever in readiness to attend his call,—he puts not forth the

powers that resided in him,—he commands his attendants to sheath the swords already drawn in his defence,—he repairs the violence that one of them already had committed,—and after such rebuke to the traitor, and such expostulations with the officers, as might show them that he knew every particular of the conspiracy, and was aware of all that was intended, he surrenders himself without resistance, thus verifying the ancient prediction, "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

The chief priests and elders were unwilling to put him to death by their own authority, lest they should incur the charge of tumult and sedition; for Judea being at this time a Roman province, death could not regularly be inflicted without the permission at least of the Roman governor, and they were desirous of putting the face of public justice upon the whole of the transaction. Cool and crafty in their malice, they present him before Pilate,

and, urging the complicated charge of blasphemy and sedition, insist upon his death. Pilate well understood that both these accusations were groundless: but he was very unpopular in his province, which he is said to have ruled with a rod of iron. He was given to understand, that if he stood forth as the friend of Jesus, he would himself incur the accusation of traiterous designs. He took the alarm at this. He saw that complaints might be carried to Rome: he well knew the jealous temper of the Emperor Tiberius, ever ready to listen to complaints against his provincial governors—cruel and implacable in his resentments: he thought the present opportunity was not to be missed of doing the Jews a pleasure, by throwing away the life, as he conceived, of an inconsiderable friendless man, who, when once he was gone, would never be inquired after. And from these motives of selfish cunning and guilty fear, Pilate, against the remonstrances of his conscience and the warnings of Heaven, consented to our Saviour's death.

The execution of the Roman governor's sentence fell in course upon the Roman soldiers, and this insured that particular kind of death which our Lord had himself predicted; for crucifixion was not the punishment which the Jewish law appointed for the crimes wherewith Jesus was charged, but it was one which the Romans inflicted upon offenders of the meanest condition, or those who had been guilty of the most atrocious and flagitious crimes. The living body of the sufferer was fastened to two cross pieces of wood, by nails driven through the hands and feet; the feet being nailed to the upright post, and the hands to the two extremities of the transverse beam. In this situation, the miserable objects of this barbarous punishment were left to consume in lingering and dreadful torments: for as none of the parts essential to life was immediately injured, none of the vital actions immediately impeded, and none of the larger blood vessels set open, the death was necessarily slow; and the multitude of nerves that terminate in the

hands and feet giving those parts the nicest sensibility, rendered the sufferings exquisite.

Such was the death to which the unrelenting malice of his enemies consigned the meek and holy Jesus. I must not farther pursue the detail of those minute occurrences, in which, though brought about by natural and common causes, the ancient prophecies concerning the circumstances of our Saviour's passion were remarkably fulfilled. It was not till every tittle was fulfilled, that the patient Son of God, as if then and not before at liberty to depart, said "It is finished!" bowed his anointed head, and rendered up the ghost. Wonderful catastrophe! replete with mysteries; among which the harmony of divine providence and human liberty is not the least. Mechanical causes, governed by a single intellect, could not with more certainty have wrought the predetermined effect: independent beings could not have pursued with greater liberty, than the persons concerned in this horrid transaction, each his separate design. "*It is finished!*"

Holy victim! thy suf'erings are finished! *All* is finished. h t wicked men were wonderfully destined to contribute towards the general delivera.. e! What remains, infinite power and infinite mercy shall accomplish. The disciples, those few of them who had the courage to be present at this dismal scene, hang their heads in sorrowful despondency, and seem to have abandoned the hope that *this* was He who should redeem Israel. But Israel *is* redeemed. The high sacrifice, appointed before the foundation of the world, typified in all the sacrifices of the law, is now slain, and is accepted. That Jesus who according to his own prediction hath expired on the cross, shall, according to his own prediction, be raised again on the third day. He is raised,—he is entered into glory,—he is sitten down for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high: there he pleads the merit of his blood in behalf of those crying sins that caused it to be shed. Nor does he plead in vain. The final judgment is committed to him; and the greatest of sinners that

will but forsake their evil ways have no reason to fear the severity of a judge who hath himself been touched with the feeling of our infirmities. On the other hand, let not any deceive themselves with a vain reliance on his merits, who, after all that the Son of God hath done and suffered for them, remain impenitent. The sacrifice of the cross was no less a display of the just severity than of the tender mercy of God. The authority of his government must be maintained. This rendered intercession and atonement necessary for the pardon of sin in the first instance,—the most meritorious intercession, the highest atonement. For those "who despise so great salvation," who cannot be reclaimed by the promises and threatenings of the gospel—by the warnings of God's wrath—by the assurances of mercy—by the contemplation of their Saviour's love,—for those who cannot be reclaimed by these powerful motives from obstinate courses of wilful vice, there assuredly "remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-

for of fiery indignation," which at the last day shall burn with inextinguishable rage against these incorrigible adversaries of God and goodness. Grant, O Lord, that all we who are this day assembled before thee, lamenting our sins and imploring thy mercy, may be permitted, through the intercession of thy Son, to escape the everlasting horrors of that second death!

SERMON XX.

1 PETER, iii. 18, 19, 20.

"—— *Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.*"

IN the first rudiments of our Christian faith, comprised in the apostles' creed, which we are made to get by heart in our earliest infancy, we are taught to believe that "our Lord Jesus Christ descended into hell;" and this belief is solemnly professed by every member of the congregation, when that creed is repeated in the daily service of the church. And it seemed

of so much importance that it should be distinctly acknowledged by the church of England, when we separated from the Roman communion, that our reformers thought proper to make it by itself the subject of one of the articles of religion. They were aware that upon the fact of our Lord's descent into hell the church of Rome pretended to build her doctrine of purgatory, which they justly esteemed one of her worst corruptions; but, apprehensive that the zeal of reformation might in this, as in some other instances, carry men too far, and induce them to reject a most important truth, on which a dangerous error had been once ingrafted,—to prevent this intemperance of reform, they assert, in the third article of the Thirty-nine, "That as Christ died for us and was buried, so it is to be believed that he went down into hell." The terms in which they state the proposition, imply that Christ's going down into hell is a matter of no less importance to be believed than that he died upon the cross for men—is no less a plain mat-

ter of fact in the history of our Lord's life and death than the burial of his dead body. It should seem, that what is thus taught among the first things which children learn, should be among the plainest,—that what is thus laid down as a matter of the same necessity to be believed as our Lord's passion and atonement, should be among the least disputed,—that what every Christian is required to acknowledge as his own belief, in the daily assemblies of the faithful, should little need either explanation or proof to any that have been instructed in the very first principles only of the doctrine of Christ. But so it is, that what the sagacity of our reformers foresaw, the precaution which they used has not prevented. The truth itself has been brought into discredit by the errors with which it has been adulterated; and such has been the industry of modern refinement, and unfortunately so great has been its success, that doubts have been raised about the sense of this plain article of our creed by some, and by others about the truth and authenticity of

it. It will therefore be no unprofitable undertaking to show that the assertion in the apostles' creed, that "our Lord descended into hell," is to be taken as a plain matter of fact in the literal meaning of the words,—to show what proof of this fact we have in holy writ,—and, lastly, to show the great use and importance of the fact as a point of Christian doctrine.

First then, for the sense of the proposition, "He descended into hell." If we consider the words as they stand in the Creed itself, and in connexion with what immediately precedes and follows them, they appear evidently to contain a declaration of something which our Lord performed—some going of our Lord to a place called "hell," in the interval of time between the burial of his dead body and his rising to life again on the third day after that interment; for thus speaks the Creed of Jesus Christ: "—was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead." It is evident that the de

scending into hell is spoken of as an action of our Lord, but as an action performed by him after he was dead and buried, and before he rose again. In the body, our dead Lord, more than any other dead man, could perform no action; for the very notion of death is, that all sensation, and activity, and power of motion of the body, is in that state of the man extinguished. This, therefore, was an act of that part of the man which continues active after death,—that is, of the soul separated by death from the body,—as the interment must be understood of the body apart from the soul. The dead body could no more go into hell than the living soul could be laid in the grave. Considering the words, therefore, as they stand in the Creed as the church now receives it, they seem as little capable of any variety of meaning, and almost as little to require explanation, as the word "buried." That word describes not more plainly, to the apprehensions of all men, what was done with the inanimate body of our crucified Lord, than these words de-

clare what was done by his rational soul in its intermediate state. The only question that can possibly arise to a plain man's understanding is, where or what the place may be which is here called hell, to which it is said our Lord in the state of death descended.

It is evident that this must be some place below the surface of the earth; for it is said that he "descended," that is, he went down to it. Our Lord's death took place upon the surface of the earth, where the human race inhabit; that, therefore, and none higher, is the place from which he descended: of consequence, the place to which he went by descent was below it; and it is with relation to these parts below the surface that his rising to life on the third day must be understood. This was only a return from the nether regions to the realms of life and day, from which he had descended,—not his ascension into heaven, which was a subsequent event, and makes a distinct article in the Creed.

But although the hell to which our Lord descended was indeed below, as the word "descent" implies, it is by no means to be understood of the place of torment. This is a point which requires elucidation, to prevent a mistake into which the unlearned easily might fall. The word "hell" is so often applied, in common speech, and in the English translation of the New Testament, to the place of torment, that the genuine meaning of the word (in which, however, it is used in many passages of the English Bible) is almost forgotten; and the common people never hear of hell but their thoughts are carried to that dismal place "where the fallen angels are kept in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." But the word, in its natural import, signifies only that invisible place which is the appointed habitation of departed souls in the interval between death and the general resurrection. That such a place must be is indisputable; for when man dieth, his soul dieth not, but returneth unto him that gave

it, to be disposed of at his will and pleasure,—which is clearly implied in that admonition of our Saviour, "Fear not them which kill the body, but cannot kill the soul." But the soul, existing after death, and separated from the body, though of a nature immaterial, must be in some place: for however metaphysicians may talk of place as one of the adjuncts of body, as if nothing but gross sensible body could be limited to a place, to exist without relation to place seems to be one of the incommunicable perfections of the Divine Being; and it is hardly to be conceived that any created spirit, of however high an order, can be without locality, or without such determination of its existence at any given time to some certain place, that it shall be true to say of it "Here it is, and not elsewhere." That such at least is the condition of the human soul, were it seasonable to go into so abstruse a disquisition, might be proved, I think, indisputably from holy writ. Assuming, therefore, that every departed soul has its place of

residence, it would be reasonable to suppose, if revelation were silent on the subject, that a common mansion is provided for them all, their nature being similar; since we see throughout all nature creatures of the same sort placed together in the same element. But revelation is not silent. The sacred writers of the Old Testament speak of such a common mansion in the inner parts of the earth; and we find the same opinion so general among the heathen writers of antiquity, that it is more probable that it had its rise in the earliest patriarchal revelations than in the imaginations of man, or in poetical fiction. The notion is confirmed by the language of the writers of the New Testament, with this additional circumstance, that they divide this central mansion of the dead into two distinct regions, for the separate lodging of the souls of the righteous and the reprobate. In this, too, they have the concurrence of the earliest heathen poets, who placed the good and the bad in separate divi-

sions of the central region. The name which the Hebrew writers gave to this mansion of departed souls (without regard to any such division) expresses only that it is a place unknown, about which all are curious and inquisitive. The writers of the New Testament adopted the name which the earliest Greek writers had given it, which describes it by the single property of invisibility. But for the place of torment by itself, they had quite another appellation. The English word "hell," in its primary and natural meaning, signifies nothing more than "the unseen and covered place;" and is properly used, both in the Old and the New Testament, to render the Hebrew word in the one, and the Greek word in the other, which denote the invisible mansion of disembodied souls, without any reference to suffering. But being used also in the translation of the New Testament for that other word which properly denotes the place of torment, the good sense of the word, if we may

so call it, is unfortunately forgotten, and the common people know of no other hell but that of the burning lake.

This certainly was *not* the hell to which the soul of Christ descended. He descended to hell properly so called,—to the invisible mansion of departed spirits, and to that part of it where the souls of the faithful, when they are delivered from the burthen of the flesh, are in joy and felicity.

That he should go to this place was a necessary branch of the general scheme and project of redemption, which required that the Divine Word should take our nature upon him, and fulfil the entire condition of humanity in every period and stage of man's existence, from the commencement of life, in the mother's womb, to the extinction and the renovation of it. The same wonderful scheme of humiliation which required that the Son should be conceived, and born, and put to death, made it equally necessary that his soul, in its intermediate state,

should be gathered to the souls of the departed saints.

That the invisible place of their residence is the hell to which our Lord descended, is evident from the terms of his own promise to the repentant thief upon the cross. "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise was certainly some place where our Lord was to be on the very day on which he suffered, and where the companion of his sufferings was to be with him. It was not heaven; for to heaven our Lord after his death ascended not till after his resurrection, as appears from his own words to Mary Magdalen. He was not therefore in heaven on the day of the crucifixion; and where *he* was not the thief could not be with him. It was no place of torment; for to any such place the name of paradise never was applied. It could be no other than that region of repose and rest where the souls of the righteous abide in joyful hope of the consummation of their bliss. And upon

this single text we might safely rest the proof of this article of our creed in the sense in which we explain it,—a sense so plain and prominent, in the bare words, to every one who is not misled by the popular misapplication of the word "hell," that it never would have been set aside to make room for expositions of more refinement, much less would the authenticity of the article ever even have been questioned, but for the countenance which it was supposed to give to the doctrine of purgatory as taught in the church of Rome, with which however it has not even a remote connexion. Time will not permit me to enter into a particular examination of the different interpretations of this article which have been attempted by those who have not gone the length of proposing to expunge it from the Creed, because they were well aware, that although it is not to be found in any copy of the Creed now extant of an earlier date than the latter end of the fourth century, yet that Christ, in some sense or other,

descended into hell, was the unanimous belief of the Christian church from the earliest ages. I will offer only this general observation,—that the interpretation which I have given is the only literal interpretation which the words will bear, unless we would admit the extravagant assertion, as to me it seems, of the venerable Calvin, that our blessed Lord actually went down to the place of torment, and there sustained (horrible to think or mention!) the pains of a reprobate soul in punishment,—a notion evidently confuted by our Lord's own description of the place where the companion of his sufferings on the cross was to be with him on the very day of the crucifixion. This sense being thus confuted, I say the personal descent of our Lord to that region where the souls of the righteous rest in hope, is the only literal interpretation which the words of the article will bear; and that any figurative interpretation of the words of a creed or formulary of faith are inadmissible; for, in such a composition, intended to convey the knowledge of

the most important truths to the most ordinary understandings, the ornamental figures of rhetoric or poetry would be no less out of place than in the opinion of a judge upon a question of law, or in a mathematical demonstration. They could have no other effect than to introduce doubt, where every thing ought to be precise and unequivocal. Without entering, therefore, into a particular confutation of the figurative interpretations that have been offered of this article of the Creed, I shall proceed at once to show what proof we find in Scripture of the fact averred, according to the literal meaning of the words, that "Christ descended into hell."

This proof rests, I think, principally upon three texts of Scripture, in addition to that which I have already mentioned as affording by itself ample confirmation of the truth of the proposition, namely, our Lord's promise to the penitent thief upon the cross. But there are three other texts which conspire with this to put the matter out of doubt. The first is that

text of the psalmist which was alleged by St Peter, in his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, as a prophecy concerning Christ, verified in his resurrection from the dead. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." The apostle having recited these words of the psalmist, says they were not spoken by David of himself, but that David being a prophet spake of the resurrection of Christ,—that *his* soul was not left in hell, neither did *his* flesh see corruption. From this text, if there were no other, the article, in the sense in which we have explained it, is clearly and infallibly deduced; for if the soul of Christ were not left in hell *at* his resurrection, then it *was* in hell *before* his resurrection. But it was not there either before his death or after his resurrection, for that never was imagined: therefore it descended into hell after his death, and before his resurrection; for as his flesh, by virtue of the Divine promise, saw no corruption although it was in the grave the place of corruption,

where it remained until his resurrection, so his soul, which by virtue of the like promise was not left in hell, was *in* that hell where it was not *left*, until the time came for its reunion to the body for the accomplishment of the resurrection. Hence it is so clearly evinced that the soul of Christ was in the place called hell, "that none but an infidel," saith St Augustine, "can deny it."

Another text which carries us to the same conclusion, is in the fourth chapter of St Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, in the apostle's reasoning upon a passage of the sixty-eighth psalm, which he applies as prophetic of the various gifts which Christ, after his ascension, conferred upon the members of his church. The psalmist speaks to this effect, as he is cited by the apostle: "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." "Now that he ascended," says the apostle, arguing upon the psalmist's words, "what is it but that he descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"—intimating that

the ascending up on high of which the psalmist speaks, is to be understood in reference to a previous descent into the lowest regions, as its opposite.

Some, however, have imagined, that the descent into hell is not to be deduced from this text with the same certainty as from the former. They imagine something of ambiguity in the phrase of "the lower parts of the earth." Rightly referring the ascending up on high to our Lord's ascension into heaven, they think that "the lower parts of the earth" may signify the earth generally, as lower than the heavens, and even nothing lower than the very surface of it. And it must be confessed that our Lord speaks of himself before his death, while he was living upon the surface of the earth, as having come down to it from heaven. Nevertheless, "the lower parts of the earth," in the Greek language, in which the apostle writes, is a periphrasis for "hell" in the proper sense of that word, as the invisible mansion of departed spirits. The

phrase is so perfectly equivalent to the word "hell," that we find it used instead of that word in some of the Greek copies of the Creed, in this very article, where the mention of our Lord's coming down from heaven to dwell upon the earth would be quite out of place, after the mention of the several events of his birth, crucifixion, death, and burial, in their natural order and succession. But, indeed, this phrase of the "lower parts of the earth" is in the Greek language so much a name for the central parts of the globe, as distinguished from the surface or the outside on which we live, that had the apostle intended by this phrase to denote the inhabited surface of the earth, as lower than the heavens, we may confidently say his Greek converts at Ephesus would not easily have guessed his meaning. This text, therefore, when the Greek words are taken in the only sense in which any writer in that language would have used, or any one who spoke the language would have under-

stood them, expressly affirms a descent of Christ's spirit into hell.

A third scripture which goes to the proof of the same fact, is that very remarkable passage in the third chapter of St Peter's first epistle, which I have chosen for my text. I might mention, as a fourth, another passage in the following chapter of the same epistle, which alludes to the same event, but not, I think, with equal certainty; for the sense of that following passage is indeed dependent upon this, insomuch that any figurative interpretation which would invalidate the argument we shall deduce from this first passage, would in equal degree affect the second; and no proof can be drawn from that of Christ's descent into hell, if none can be previously found in the words of my text.

But in them, taken in their most literal and obvious meaning, we find not only a distinct assertion of the fact that "Christ descended into hell" in his disembodied spirit, but more-

over, a declaration of the business upon which he went thither, or in which at least his soul was employed while it was there. "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient." The interpretation of this whole passage turns upon the expression "spirits in prison;" the sense of which I shall first, therefore, endeavour to ascertain, as the key to the meaning of the whole. It is hardly necessary to mention, that "spirits" here can signify no other spirits than the souls of men; for we read, not of any preaching of Christ to any other race of beings than mankind. The apostle's assertion, therefore, is this, that Christ went and preached to souls of men in prison. The invisible mansion of departed spirits, though certainly not a place of penal confinement to the good, is nevertheless in some respects a prison. It is a place of seclusion from the external world—a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security, and hope,

more than enjoyment. It is a place which the souls of men never would have entered, had not sin introduced death, and from which there is no exit by any natural means for those who once have entered. The deliverance of the saints from it is to be effected by our Lord's power. It is described in the old Latin language as a place enclosed within an impassable fence; and in the poetical parts of Scripture it is represented as secured by gates of brass, which our Lord is to batter down, and barricadoed with huge massive iron bars, which he is to cut in sunder. As a place of confinement, therefore, though not of punishment, it may well be called a prison. The original word, however, in this text of the apostle, imports not of necessity so much as this, but merely a place of safe keeping; for so this passage might be rendered with great exactness. "He went and preached to the spirits in safe keeping." And the invisible mansion of departed souls is to the righteous a place of safe keeping, where they are preserved under

the shadow of God's right hand, as their condition sometimes is described in Scripture, till the season shall arrive for their advancement to their future glory; as the souls of the wicked, on the other hand, are reserved, in the other division of the same place, unto the judgment of the great day. Now, if Christ went and preached to souls of men thus in prison or in safe keeping, surely he went to the prison of those souls, or to the place of their custody; and what place that should be but the hell of the apostles' creed, to which our Lord descended, I have not yet met with the critic that could explain. So clearly does this text affirm the fact of Christ's descent into hell.

But this is not all. It agrees with the apostles' creed in the time of this event, that it was in the interval between our Lord's death and resurrection; for the apostle affirms, that it was in his spirit, *i. e.* in his disembodied soul, that Christ went and preached to those souls in safe custody. "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." "Quick-

ened by the Spirit."—The Spirit, in these English words, seems to be put, not for the soul of Christ, but for the Divine Spirit; and the sense seems to be, that Christ, after he was put to death, was raised to life again by the Holy Spirit. But this, though it be the sense of the English translation, and a true proposition, is certainly not the sense of the apostle's words. It is of great importance to remark, though it may seem a grammatical nicety, that the prepositions, in either branch of this clause, have been supplied by the translators, and are not in the original. The words "flesh" and "spirit," in the original, stand without any preposition, in that case which, in the Greek language, without any preposition, is the case either of the cause or instrument by which —of the time when—of the place where—of the part in which—of the manner how—or of the respect in which, according to the exigence of the context; and, to any one who will consider the original with critical accuracy, it will be obvious, from the perfect antithesis of

these two clauses concerning flesh and spirit, that if the word "spirit" denote the active cause by which Christ was restored to life, which must be supposed by them who understand the word of the Holy Ghost, the word "flesh" must equally denote the active cause by which he was put to death, which therefore must have been the flesh of his own body,—an interpretation too manifestly absurd to be admitted. But if the word "flesh" denote, as it most evidently does, the part in which death took effect upon him, "spirit" must denote the part in which life was preserved in him, *i. e.* his own soul; and the word "quickened" is often applied to signify, not the resuscitation of life extinguished, but the preservation and continuance of life subsisting. The exact rendering, therefore, of the apostle's words would be—"Being put to death in the flesh, but quick in the spirit," *i. e.* surviving in his soul the stroke of death which his body had sustained; "by which," or rather "in which," that is, in which surviving soul, "he

went and preached to the souls of men in prison or in safe keeping."

It is not to be wondered that this text should have been long considered in the church as one of the principal foundations of the catholic belief of Christ's descent into hell: it is rather to be wondered that so clear a proof should ever have been abandoned. In the articles of religion agreed upon in convocation in the year 1552, the 6th of Edward the Sixth, and published by the king's authority the year following, the third article is in these words: "As Christ died and was buried for us, so also it is to be believed that he went down into hell; for the body lay in the sepulchre until the resurrection, but his ghost departing from him, was with the ghosts that were in prison, or in hell, as the place of St Peter doth testify." But in the short interval of ten years, between this convocation in the reign of Edward and the setting forth of the Thirty-nine Articles in their present form, in the 5th of Queen Elizabeth, a change seems to have taken place in

the opinions of the divines of our church with respect to this text of St Peter; for in the articles, as they were then drawn, and we now have them, Christ's descent into hell is still asserted, but the proof of it from the text of St Peter is withdrawn,—as if the literal sense of the text which affords the proof had fallen under suspicion, and some other exposition of it had been adopted. This change of opinion, I fear, is to be ascribed to an undue reliance of the divines of that time on the authority of St Austin; for St Austin was, I think, the first who doubted of the literal sense of this passage of St Peter. He perplexes himself with some questions, which seemed to him to arise out of it, of too great subtlety perhaps to be solved by man; and then he had recourse to the usual but dangerous expedient of abandoning the plain meaning of the passage, for some loose figurative interpretation, which presents a proposition of no sort of difficulty to the understanding of the critic, because in truth it is a proposition of his own making. I

mean not to depreciate the character of St Austin. He was indeed, in his day, a burning and a shining light; and he has been ever since, by his writings, one of the brightest luminaries of the Latin church,—a man of warm unaffected piety, of the greatest natural talents and the highest attainments, exercised in the assiduous study of the Holy Scriptures, replete with sacred learning, and withal deeply versed in that Pagan lore, in which, however it may have been of late shamefully calumniated, the soundest divines have always been great proficients. In polite literature he was the rival —in science and philosophy the superior, by many degrees, of his great contemporary St Jerome. But it was a culpable deference to the authority even of so great and good a man, if his doubts were in any case turned into objections, and the interpretation of Scripture adjusted to opinions which he himself propounds with doubt and hesitation. Those in later times who have improved upon St Austin's hint of figurating this passage, have succeeded

no better than they who have made the like attempt upon the article of our Lord's descent in the Creed. They tell us, that by the souls in prison are to be understood the Gentile world in bondage and captivity to sin and Satan, and held in the chains of their own lusts; and, for confirmation of this, they refer to those passages of the prophet Isaiah in which it is predicted of Christ, that he is to bring the prisoners out of prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house,—that he is to say to the prisoners, "Go forth,"—that he is to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that are bound.

Now, we deny not that the state of the unregenerate carnal man is indeed represented in Scripture under the images of captivity and bondage, and his sinful lusts under the images of chains and fetters; but, with respect to the alleged passages from the prophet Isaiah,—in the last of them most indubitably, and I believe in all, but in the last without doubt, the prison is no other than that self-same place

which is the prison or place of safe keeping in this text of St Peter, according to our notion of it. The enlargement of the saints from the confinement of that place is the liberation predicted. Their souls in that place are the captives to whom the Redeemer, at the season of his final triumph over death and hell, shall say "Go forth." These texts of the prophet, therefore, rather afford a confirmation of the literal acceptation of the apostle's words, than of those jejune figurative interpretations, which modern criticism, scared at the bugbear of purgatory, would substitute for the plain and obvious sense.

It cannot, however, be dissembled, that difficulties arise out of the particular character of the souls in custody; to which I shall give such consideration as the time will permit.

The souls in custody, to whom our Saviour went in his disembodied soul and preached, were those "which sometime were disobedient." The expression "sometime were," or "one while had been disobedient," implies

that they were recovered, however, from that disobedience, and, before their death, had been brought to repentance and faith in the Redeemer to come. To such souls he went and preached. But what did he preach to departed souls, and what could be the end of his preaching? Certainly he preached neither repentance nor faith; for the preaching of either comes too late to the departed soul. These souls had believed and repented, or they had not been in that part of the nether regions which the soul of the Redeemer visited. Nor was the end of his preaching any liberation of them from we know not what purgatorial pains, of which the Scriptures give not the slightest intimation. But if he went to proclaim to them (and to proclaim or publish is the true sense of the word "to preach") the glad tidings, that he had actually offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father as their intercessor, in the merit of his own blood, this was a preaching fit to be addressed to departed souls, and

would give new animation and assurance to their hope of the consummation in due season of their bliss; and this, it may be presumed, was the end of his preaching. But the great difficulty, in the description of the souls to whom this preaching for this purpose was addressed, is this, that they were souls of some of the antediluvian race. Not that it at all startles me to find antediluvian souls in safe keeping for final salvation: on the contrary, I should find it very difficult to believe (unless I were to read it somewhere in the Bible), that of the millions that perished in the general deluge, all died hardened in impenitence and unbelief, insomuch that not one of that race could be an object of future mercy, beside the eight persons who were miraculously saved in the ark, for the purpose of repeopling the depopulated earth. Nothing in the general plan of God's dealings with mankind, as revealed in Scripture, makes it necessary to suppose, that, of the antediluvian race who might repent upon Noah's preaching, more

would be saved from the temporal judgment than the purpose of a gradual repopulation of the world demanded; or to suppose, on the other hand, that all who perished in the flood are to perish everlastingly in the lake of fire. But the great difficulty, of which perhaps I may be unable to give any adequate solution, is this,—For what reason should the proclamation of the finishing of the great work of redemption be addressed exclusively to the souls of these antediluvian penitents? Were not the souls of the penitents of later ages equally interested in the joyful tidings? To this I can only answer, that I think I have observed, in some parts of Scripture, an anxiety, if the expression may be allowed, of the sacred writers to convey distinct intimations that the antediluvian race is not uninterested in the redemption and the final retribution. It is for this purpose, as I conceive, that in the description of the general resurrection, in the visions of the Apocalypse, it is mentioned with a particular emphasis, that the "*sea* gave up the

dead that were in it;" which I cannot be content to understand of the few persons—few in comparison of the total of mankind—lost at different times by shipwreck (a poor circumstance to find a place in the midst of the magnificent images which surround it), but of the myriads who perished in the general deluge, and found their tomb in the waters of that raging ocean. It may be conceived, that the souls of those who died in that dreadful visitation might from that circumstance have peculiar apprehensions of themselves as the marked victims of divine vengeance, and might peculiarly need the consolation which the preaching of our Lord in the subterranean regions afforded to these prisoners of hope. However that may be, thither, the apostle says, he went and preached. Is any difficulty that may present itself to the human mind, upon the circumstances of that preaching, of sufficient weight to make the thing unfit to be believed upon the word of the apostle?—or are we justified, if, for such difficulties, we abandon the

plain sense of the apostle's words, and impose upon them another meaning, not easily adapted to the words, though more proportioned to the capacity of our understanding,—especially when it is confirmed by other scriptures that he went to that place? In that place he could not but find the souls which are in it in safe keeping; and, in some way or other, it cannot but be supposed that he would hold conference with them; and a particular conference with one class might be the means, and certainly could be no obstruction, to a general communication with all. If the clear assertions of holy writ are to be discredited, on account of difficulties which may seem to the human mind to arise out of them, little will remain to be believed in revealed or even in what is called natural religion: we must immediately part with the doctrines of atonement—of gratuitous redemption—of justification by faith, without the works of the law—of sanctification by the influence of the Holy Spirit; and we must part at once with the hope of the re-

surrection. "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" are questions more easily asked than answered, unless it may be an answer, to refer the proposer of them to the promises of holy writ, and the power of God to make good those promises.

Having now, I trust, shown that the article of Christ's descent into hell is to be taken as a plain matter of fact, in the literal meaning of the words,—having exhibited the positive proof that we find of this fact in holy writ,—having asserted the literal meaning of my text, and displayed, in its full force, the convincing proof to be deduced from this passage in particular, I shall now, with great brevity, demonstrate the great use and importance of the fact itself as a point of Christian doctrine.

Its great use is this,—that it is a clear confutation of the dismal notion of death as a temporary extinction of the life of the whole man; or, what is no less gloomy and discouraging, the notion of the sleep of the soul in the interval between death and the resurrec-

tion. Christ was made so truly man, that whatever took place in the human nature of Christ may be considered as a model and example of what must take place, in a certain due proportion and degree, in every man united to him. Christ's soul survived the death of his body: therefore shall the soul of every believer survive the body's death. Christ's disembodied soul descended into hell: thither, therefore, shall the soul of every believer in Christ descend. In that place, the soul of Christ, in its separate state, possessed and exercised active powers: in the same place, therefore, shall the believer's soul possess and exercise activity. Christ's soul was not left in hell: neither shall the souls of his servants there be left but for a season. The appointed time will come, when the Redeemer shall set open the doors of their prison-house, and say to his redeemed "Go forth."

SERMON XXI.

MARK, ii. 27

"*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.*"

THE two opposite characters of the hypocrite and the prophane are in no part of their conduct more conspicuously distinguished, than by the opposite errors which they seem to adopt concerning the degree of attention due to the positive institutions of religion, whether of human or Divine appointment. Under the name of positive institutions, we comprehend all those impositions and restraints, which not being suggested to any man by his conscience, and having no necessary and natural connexion

with the dictates of that internal monitor, seem to have no importance but what they may derive from the will of a superior who prescribes them. Of this sort, as far as we at present understand it, was the restriction laid upon our first parents in paradise—the prohibition of the use of blood for food, after the deluge—the rite of circumcision in Abraham's family—the whole of the Mosaic ritual—the sacraments of the Christian church—the institution of the Sabbath—and, besides these, all ceremonies of worship whatsoever, of human appointment. All these things come under the notion of positive institutions; for although the expediency of things of the kind, in the several successive ages of the world, is sufficiently apparent, yet the particular merit of the special acts enjoined, for which they might be preferable to other acts which might have been devised for the same purpose, is perhaps in none of the instances alleged very easy to be discovered. That men should assemble, at stated seasons, for the public worship of God,

all must perceive to be a duty, who acknowledge that a creature endowed with the high faculties of reason and intelligence owes to his Maker public expressions of homage and adoration: but that the assembly should recur every seventh, rather than every sixth or every eighth day, no natural sanctity of the seventh more than of the sixth or eighth persuades. That Christians, in their public assemblies, should commemorate that death by which death was overcome, and the gate of everlasting life set open to the true believer, no one who pretends to a just sense of the benefit received, and the sharpness of the pain endured, will dare to question: but the particular sanctity of the rite in use proceeds solely from our Lord's appointment. The same may be said of baptism. A rite by which new converts should be admitted into the church, and the children of Christian parents, from their earliest infancy, devoted to Christ's service in their riper age, is of evident propriety; but our Lord's solemn injunction of its constant use

constitutes the particular sanctity of that which is employed. The like observations applied with equal force, in ancient times, to the particulars of the Mosaic service, to the rite of circumcision, to the prohibition of the use of blood, and to the abstinence from the fruit of a particular tree, exacted of Adam in paradise, for no other purpose perhaps but as a test of his obedience; and they are still applicable with much greater force to all ceremonies of worship appointed in any national church by the authority of its rulers. The fact is, that all ceremonies are actions, which, by a solemn appropriation of them to particular occasions, are understood to denote or are made use of to produce certain dispositions of the mind towards God: they acquire their meaning merely from the institution; and the necessity of making a choice of some one out of a variety of acts which naturally might be equally significant and equally fit to be made subservient to the intended purpose, will always produce, even in the ordinances of Divine appointment,

an appearance at least of something arbitrary in the institution. Hence, it will of necessity come to pass, that these ordinances will be very differently regarded by different men, according as the particular cast of each man's temper and disposition—his natural turn to seriousness or gayety—his acquired habits of sincerity or dissimulation—render either the importance of the general end, or what there may seem to be of arbitrary authority in the particular institution, the object most apt to seize upon his attention; according as he is disposed to be scrupulous in his duty, or impatient of restraint—fair and open in his actions, or accustomed to seek his private ends in the fair show and semblance of a ready and exact submission to authority. With the hypocrite, therefore, the whole of the practical part of religion will consist in an ostentatious rigour in the observance of its positive precepts. With that thoughtless tribe which constitutes, it is to be feared, the far greater pro-

portion of mankind, those who, without any settled principles of positive infidelity, and without any strong propensities to the excesses of debauchery, find, however, their whole occupation in the cares and what may seem the innocent amusements of the world, and defer the consideration of the future life till they find the present drawing to a close,—with persons of this disposition, the duties of which I speak are for the most part totally neglected; insomuch, that an affected assiduity in the discharge of the positive precepts of religion on the one hand, and the neglect of them on the other, may be considered as the discriminating symptoms of the two opposite vices of hypocrisy and profaneness: for the name of profaneness, you will observe, in strict propriety of speech belongs not only to the flagrant and avowed impiety of the atheist and libertine, but to the conduct of him who, without any thing notoriously reprehensible in his morals—any thing to make him shunned and disliked

by his neighbours and acquaintances, lives, however, without any habitual fear of God and sense of religion upon his mind.

The Mosaic law, as it was planned by unerring wisdom, was unquestionably admirably well contrived for the great purposes for which it was intended,—to maintain the knowledge of the true God among a particular people, and to cherish an opinion of the necessity of an expiatory sacrifice for involuntary offences, till the season should arrive for the general revelation. Nor is it to be supposed that it failed of the purpose for which it was so well contrived. The highest examples of consummate virtue and heroic piety which the ancient world knew were formed in that people, under the discipline of their holy law; nevertheless, the great stress laid upon ceremonial observances had, notwithstanding the continual remonstrances of the prophets—not from any defect in the law itself, but from the corruption of human nature—it had at least an ill effect upon the manners of the people. Not-

withstanding the eminent instances of virtue and piety which from time to time arose among them—of virtue and piety, of which faith alone in the revelation which they enjoyed might be a sufficient foundation,—yet, if we look to the national character, especially in the later ages of the Jewish state, we shall find that it was rank hypocrisy, such as justifies what is said of them by a learned writer, that they were at the same time the most religious and the most profligate people upon the earth,—the most religious in the hypocrite's religion—the most regardless of what their own law taught them to be more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

Strange as the assertion may seem, this depravity of the Jewish people, the effect, as has been observed, of an abuse of their divine law, was favourable (so active is the merciful providence of God to bring good out of evil), —this ill effect of the abuse of the divine law was favourable to that great end to which the law tended, the introduction of an universal

revelation for the general reformation of the manners of mankind. It was favourable to this end, because it was favourable to our Saviour's method of instruction. Our Saviour's method of instruction was not by delivering a system of morality, in which the formal nature of the moral good should be traced to the original idea of the *seemly* and the *fair*—the foundations of our duty discovered in the natural relations of things, and the importance of every particular duty demonstrated by its connexion with the general happiness. This was not his method of instruction, because he well knew how long it had been followed with little effect; for abstruse speculations, whatever they may have at the bottom of solidity and truth, suit not the capacities of the many, and influence the hearts of none. The method of instruction which he chose, was to throw out general maxims respecting the different branches of human duty, as often as, in the course of an unreserved intercourse with persons of all ranks, characters, and conditions,

he found occasion either to reprove the errors and enormities which fell under his observation, or to vindicate his own conduct and that of his disciples, when either was unjustly arraigned by the hypocrites of the times. Had the manners of his contemporaries been less reprehensible, or their hypocrisy less rigid and censorious, the occasions of instruction by reproof and apology would have less frequently occurred. It was an accusation of his disciples as profaners of the Sabbath, when they took the liberty to satisfy their hunger with the ripe ears of standing corn, which they plucked as they chanced to cross a corn field on the Sabbath day, which drew from him that admirable maxim which I have chosen for my text,—a maxim which, rightly understood, may be applied to all the positive precepts of religion no less than to the Sabbath, and clearly settles the degree of attention that is due to them; insomuch, that whoever will keep this maxim in its right sense constantly in view, will with certainty avoid the two extremes of an unre-

cessary rigour in the observance of these secondary duties, on the one hand, and a profane neglect of them on the other.

After all that can be said, and said with truth, about the immutable distinctions of right and wrong, and the eternal fitness of things, it should seem that the will of God is the true foundation of moral obligation; for I cannot understand that any man's bare perception of the natural seemliness of one action and unseemliness of another, should bring him under an obligation upon all occasions to do the one and to avoid the other, at the hazard of his life, to the detriment of his fortune, or even to the diminution of his own ease, which suffers diminution more or less in every instance in which he lays a constraint upon his own inclination. I say, I cannot understand how the bare perception of good in actions of one sort, or of evil in actions of another, should create such an obligation, that a man, if he were not accountable to a superior for the con-

duct of his life, should yet be criminal, if, in view of his own happiness or ease, he should sometimes think proper to omit the action which he admires, or to do that which he disapproves. No such obligation therefore arising from the mere intuitive perception of the differences of right and wrong, it follows, that notwithstanding the reality of those differences, and the incommutable nature of the two things, still the obligation upon man to act in conformity to these perceptions arises from the will of God, who enjoins a conformity of our conduct to these natural apprehensions of our minds, and binds the obligation by assurances that what we lose of present gratification shall be amply compensated in a future retribution, and by threatening the disobedient with heavier ills than the restraints of self-denial or the loss of life. But if this be the case, that the will of God is the sole foundation of man's duty, it should seem that the distinction which is usually made between the great natural du-

ties of justice and sobriety—all, in short, that are included in the general topics of the love of God and man,—it should seem that the distinction between these and the positive precepts of religion is imaginary, so far at least as the distinction regards positive precepts of Divine appointment; it should seem that all duties, natural and positive, are, upon this principle, of the same value and importance—that, by consequence, all crimes are equal, and that a wilful unnecessary absence from the assemblies of the seventh day, or from the Lord's table, is a crime of no less guilt than theft or murder.

The highest authority hath decided otherwise, and hath established the distinction. Our Lord told his disciples, that "unless their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they should in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven,"—that is, unless it should be a righteousness of a higher kind; for, in the sort of righteousness

which they practised, the scribes and Pharisees were not easily to be outdone. He recommended to them two things very contrary to the hypocrite's religion, secrecy and brevity in their devotions. He seemed industriously to seek occasions of doing those good actions on the Sabbath day, which, to those who understood not how the principle and the end sanctified these works of mercy, seemed a violation of the institution: and it was in justification of an action in which no such merit could be pretended—an action done by some of his followers, perhaps without much consideration, to appease the cravings of a keen appetite—that he alleged the maxim in the text, "that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,"—a maxim which, at the same time that it establishes in the most peremptory terms the distinction between natural duties and positive institutions, defines with the greatest precision and perspicuity in what the difference consists, and as little justi-

fies the wilful neglect of the ordinances of religion as it countenances an hypocritical formality in the performance or a superstitious reliance on the merit of them.

Although the obligation upon man to a discharge of any duty arises, as I have observed, from the sole will of God, yet, in the great duties of justice and charity in our dealings with men—of mildness to our inferiors, courtesy to our equals, and submission to our governors—of sobriety and temperance in the refections of the body, and of moderation in the pleasures which belong to the animal life, —in all these we can discern a natural fitness and propriety immutably inherent in the things themselves; insomuch, that any rational being, once placed in a situation to be superior to the influence of external motives, and to be determined in his conduct by the sole approbation of his own mind, must always delight in them: and though occasions may arise which may render a contrary conduct useful to the indi-

vidual. yet no occasions can arise which may render it so lovely and laudable. Now, although this natural fitness and propriety be not the origin of moral obligation among men, yet it is indeed a higher principle; for it is that from which that will of God himself originates by which the natural discernment of our conscience acquires the force of a law for the regulation of our lives. Of these duties of inherent and immutable propriety, it were not true to say that they are made for man: but what is denied of positive institutions is true of these, that man was made for them. They are analogous to the moral attributes of the Deity himself. The more that any man is fixed in the habitual love and practice of them, the more the image of God in that man is perfected. The perfection of these moral attributes is the foundation of the necessity of God's own existence; and if the enjoyment and display of them is (if the expression may be allowed) the end and purpose to which God himself exists.

the humble imitation of these Divine perfections is the end and purpose for which men and angels were created.

We discern, therefore, in these natural duties, that intrinsic worth and seemliness which is the motive that determines the Divine will to exact the performance of them from the rational part of his creation; for God's will is not arbitrary, but directed by his goodness and his wisdom. Or, to go a step higher, the natural excellence of these duties, we may reasonably presume, was the original motive which determined the Deity to create beings who should be capable of being brought to that dignity of character which a proficiency in virtue confers, and of enjoying, in their improved state of moral worth, a corresponding happiness.

But in the positive institutions of religion we discern nothing of inherent excellence. They evidently make a part of the discipline only of our present state, by which creatures

in their first state of imperfection, weak in intellect and strong in passion, might be trained to the habit of those virtues which are in themselves valuable, and, by the fear of God thus artificially as it were impressed upon their minds, be rendered in the end superior to temptation. They are therefore, as it were, but a secondary part of the will of God; and the rank which they hold as objects of God's will, the same they must hold as branches of man's obedience. They are no otherwise pleasing to God than as they are beneficial to man, by enlivening the flame of genuine religion in his bosom. Man, therefore, was not made for these, but these were made for man. To commemorate the creation of the universe by certain ceremonies in public assemblies on the seventh day, though a noble and a salutary employment of our time, is not, however, the principal business for which man was created; nor is the commemoration of our Redeemer's death, by any external rite, the principal end

and business of the Christian's calling: but the observation of the Sabbath with certain ceremonies in public assemblies, and the commemoration of our Lord's death in the eucharist, were appointed as means of cherishing in the heart of man a more serious and interested attention to those duties which are the real end and purpose of his existence, and the peculiar service which the Christian owes his Lord, who bought him with his blood. And thus we see the distinction between the primary duties and the positive precepts of religion. The practice of the first is the very end for which man was originally created, and, after the ruin of his fall, redeemed: the other are means appointed to facilitate and secure the attainment of the end. In themselves they are of no value; insomuch, that a scrupulous attention to these secondary duties, when the great end of them is wilfully neglected, will but aggravate the guilt of an immoral life. Man was not made for these.

But, on the other hand, it demands our serious attention, that it is declared by the very same authority that they *were made for him.* They are not mere arbitrary appointments, of no meaning or significance. They are not useless exactions of wanton power, contrived only to display the authority of the master, and to imbitter the subjection of the slave. They were made for man. They were appointed for the salutary influence which the Maker of man foresees they are likely to have upon his life and conduct. To live in the wilful neglect of them, is to neglect the means which Infinite Wisdom hath condescended to provide for the security of our future condition. The consequence naturally to be expected is that which is always seen to ensue,—a total profligacy of manners, hardness of heart, and contempt for God's word and commandment.

Having thus shown the true distinction between the primary duties and the positive pre-

cepts of religion, I shall in some future discourses proceed to the particular subject which the text more especially suggests, and inquire what the reverence may be, due to the Sabbath under the Christian dispensation; which I shall prove to be much more than it is generally understood to be, if the principles of men are to be inferred from their practice.

SERMON XXII.

MARK, ii. 27.

"*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*"

WHAT is affirmed of the Sabbath in these remarkable words is equally true of all the ordinances of external worship. The maxim therefore is general; and, at the same time that it establishes a distinction between the primary duties and the positive institutions of religion, it clearly defines the circumstance in which the difference consists. Of the positive institutions of religion, even of those of Divine appointment, whatever sanctity may be derived to them from the will of God, which is

indeed the supreme rule and proper foundation of human duty,—whatever importance may belong to them as necessary means for the attainment of the noblest end, the improvement of man's moral character, and the consequent advancement of his happiness,—yet we have our Lord's authority to say, that the observance of them is not itself the end for which man was created. Man was not made for these. Of natural duties we affirm the contrary. The acquisition of that virtue which consists in the habitual love and practice of them is the very final cause of man's existence. The intrinsic worth and seemliness of that virtue is so great, that it may be presumed to be the motive which determined the will of God to create beings with capacities for the attainment. These, therefore, are the things for which man was made. They were not made for him. They derive not their importance from a temporary subserviency to the interests of man in his present condition—to the happiness and preservation of the individual or of the kind.

They are no part of an arbitrary discipline, contrived, after man was formed, for the trial and exercise of his obedience. Their worth is in the things themselves. In authority they are higher than law—in time, older than creation—in worth, more valuable than the universe. The positive precepts of religion, on the contrary, are of the nature of political institutions, which are good or bad in relation only to the interests of particular communities. These, therefore, were made for man. And although man hath no authority to give himself a general dispensation from any law which hath the sanction of his Maker's will, yet, since God hath given him faculties to distinguish between things for which he is made and things which are made for him, it is every man's duty, in the application of God's general laws to his own conduct on particular occasions, to attend to this distinction. If, by an affected precision in the exercises of external devotion, while he disregards the great duties of morality, he thinks that he satisfies the end of his crea-

tion,—if he sets sacrifice in competition with mercy, as the Jews did, when, under the pretence of rich offerings to the temple, they defrauded their parents in their old age of the support which was their due—and when they took advantage of the rigour with which their law enjoined the observance of the Sabbath, to excuse themselves on that day from offices of charity, while they could dispense with the institution for the preservation of their own property,—whoever, after these examples, thinks to commute for natural duties by an exact observance of positive institutions, deceives himself, and offers the highest indignity to God, in believing or affecting to believe that he will judge of the conduct of moral agents otherwise than according to the truth of things—that he will prefer the means to the end, the subordinate to the primary duties. On the other hand, the wilful neglect of the ordinances of religion, under a pretence of a general attention to the weightier matters of the law, argues either a criminal security or a profane indiffe-

rence. No one, whatever pretensions he may make, can have a just sense of the importance and the difficulty of virtuous attainments, who in mere indolence desires to release himself from a discipline which may diminish the difficulty and insure the effect: nor is it consistent with just apprehensions of the Divine wisdom, to suppose that the means which God hath appointed in subservience to any end may be neglected with impunity. A neglect, therefore, of the ordinances of religion of Divine appointment, is the sure symptom of a criminal indifference about those higher duties by which men pretend to atone for the omission. It is too often found to be the beginning of a licentious life, and for the most part ends in the highest excesses of profligacy and irreligion.

Having thus taken occasion from the text to explain the comparative merit of natural duties and positive precepts, and having shown the necessity of a reverent attention to the latter, as to means appointed by God for the security of virtue in its more essential parts, I pro-

ceed to the inquiry which the text more immediately suggests,—the sanctity of the Sabbath under the Christian dispensation. The libertinism of the times renders this inquiry important; and the spirit of refinement and disputation has rendered it in some degree obscure. I shall therefore divide it into its parts, and proceed by a slow and gradual disquisition

An opinion has been for some time gaining ground, that the observation of a Sabbath in the Christian church is a matter of mere consent and custom, to which we are no more obliged by virtue of any Divine precept than to any other ceremony of the Mosaic law. I shall first, therefore, show you, that Christians actually stand obliged to the observation of a Sabbath,—that is, to the separation of some certain day for the public worship of God; and I shall reply to what may be alleged with some colour of reason on the other side of the question. I shall, in the next place, inquire how far the Christian, in the observation of his Sabbath, is held to the original injunction

of keeping every seventh day; and which day of the seven is his proper Sabbath. When I have shown you that the obligation to the observance of every seventh day actually remains upon him, and that the first day of the week is his proper Sabbath, I shall, in the last place, inquire in what manner this Christian Sabbath should be kept.

To the general question, What regard is due to the institution of a Sabbath under the Christian dispensation? the answer is plainly this,—Neither more nor less than was due to it in the patriarchal ages, before the Mosaic covenant took place. It is a gross mistake to consider the Sabbath as a mere festival of the Jewish church, deriving its whole sanctity from the Levitical law. The contrary appears, as well from the evidence of the fact which sacred history affords, as from the reason of the thing which the same history declares. The religious observation of the seventh day hath a place in the decalogue among the very first duties of natural religion. The reason as-

signed for the injunction is general, and hath no relation or regard to the particular circumstances of the Israelites, or to the particular relation in which they stood to God as his chosen people. The creation of the world was an event equally interesting to the whole human race; and the acknowledgment of God as our Creator is a duty in all ages and in all countries, equally incumbent upon every individual of mankind. The terms in which the reason of the ordinance is assigned plainly describe it as an institution of an earlier age. "Therefore the Lord blessed the seventh, and *set it apart.*" (That is the true import of the word "hallowed it.") These words, you will observe, express a past time. It is not said "Therefore the Lord *now* blesses the seventh day, and sets it apart;" but "Therefore he *did* bless it, and set it apart in time past; and he now requires that you his chosen people should be observant of that ancient institution." And in farther confirmation of the fact, we find, by the sixteenth chapter of Exodus,

that the Israelites were acquainted with the Sabbath, and had been accustomed to some observance of it before Moses received the tables of the law at Sinai. When the manna was first given for the nourishment of the army in the wilderness, the people were told, that on the sixth day they should collect the double of the daily portion. When the event was found to answer to the promise, Moses gave command that the redundant portion should be prepared and laid by for the meal of the succeeding day; "For to-morrow," said he, "is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: on that day ye shall not find it in the field; for the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days." He mentions the Sabbath as a Divine ordinance, with which he evidently supposes the people were well acquainted; for he alleges the well-known sanctity of that day to account for the extraordinary quantity of manna which was found upon the ground on the day preceding it. But the

appointment of the Sabbath, to which his words allude, must have been earlier than the appointment of it in the law, of which no part was yet given: for this first gathering of the manna, which is recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, was in the second month of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt; and at Sinai, where the law was given, they arrived not till the third. Indeed, the antiquity of the Sabbath was a thing so well understood among the Jews themselves, that some of their rabbin had the vanity to pretend that an exact adherence to the observation of this day, under the severities of the Egyptian servitude, was the merit by which their ancestors procured a miraculous deliverance. The deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage was surely an act of God's free mercy, in which their own merit had no share: nor is it likely that their Egyptian lords left them much at liberty to sanctify the Sabbath, if they were inclined to do it. The tradition, therefore, is vain and groundless: but it clearly speaks the opinion

of those among whom it passed, of the antiquity of the institution in question; which appears, indeed, upon better evidence, to have been coeval with the world itself. In the book of Genesis, the mention of this institution closes the history of the creation.

An institution of this antiquity, and of this general importance, could derive no part of its sanctity from the authority of the Mosaic law; and the abrogation of that law no more releases the worshippers of God from a rational observation of a Sabbath, than it cancels the injunction of filial piety, or the prohibitions of theft and murder, adultery, calumny, and avarice. The worship of the Christian church is properly to be considered as a restoration of the patriarchal, in its primitive simplicity and purity;—and of the patriarchal worship, the Sabbath was the noblest and, perhaps the simplest rite.

Thus it should seem that Christians are clearly obliged to the observance of a Sabbath. But let us consider what may be al-

leged with any colour of reason on the other side. Now, it may be said, that the argument which we have used for the perpetual sanctity of the Sabbath is of that sort which must go for nothing, because it proves too much. If the antiquity and the universality of the original institution be made the ground of a permanent obligation to the observance of it, it may seem a consequence, that the practice of the world, since the establishment of Christianity, must have been far more deficient than hath ever been suspected; since upon this principle, mankind, it may be said, should still be held to various ceremonies which for many ages have sunk into disuse. Circumcision, it is true, will not come within the question; for though four or perhaps six centuries older than the law, it was only a mark set upon a particular family. But the prohibition of the use of blood in food bore the same antiquity, it may be said, with respect to the second race of men, as the Sabbath with respect to the first. The prohibition of blood followed the deluge

as closely as the Sabbath followed the creation: the one was no less general to all the sons of Noah than the other to all the sons of Adam. The use of animals at all for food is only to be justified by the Creator's express permission; and since the exception of the blood of the animal accompanied the grant of the flesh, the prohibition, it may be said, unless it was at any time solemnly repealed, must be as general and as permanent as the licence. In the assembly of the apostles at Jerusalem, of which we read in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, when the question was solemnly discussed concerning the obligation of the Jewish law upon the converts from the Gentiles, the prohibition of blood was one of three things specially reserved in the solemn act of repeal in which the deliberations of that council terminated. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us,"—these are the words of the apostolical rescript,—"it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater

burthen than these necessary things,—that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to the apostles, to lay no *other* restraint upon the Gentile converts: but *this* restraint, of which an abstinence from blood made a part, it seemed good to the apostles, nor to the apostles only, but to the Holy Ghost also, to lay; and they declare that they laid it on as a *necessary* thing: whereas, in this same decree, which so remarkably reserves the abstinence from blood, the Sabbath is not at all reserved as a thing either of necessity or expedience." It should seem, therefore, it may be said, that the prohibition of blood was an ordinance of more lasting obligation than the Sabbath: the argument from antiquity and original generality applies with equal force to both; and the prohibition is enforced by the authority of the apostles, who mention no necessity of any observance of a Sabbath in the

Christian church. Upon what principle, then, is the sanctity of the Sabbath maintained by those who openly disregard the prohibition?

I must confess, that had the Sabbath been a rite of the Mosaic institution, or were any reason to be assigned for the prohibition of blood which might be of equal force in all ages, I should hold this argument unanswerable, and feel myself compelled to admit that the disregard of the Sabbath were a less crime than the use of blood: but, as the apostles assembled to consider whether the Gentile converts were to be holden to any part of the Jewish ritual, and if to any, to what part, it was beside their purpose to mention any thing that was not considered by those who consulted them as a branch of Judaism. Fornication, indeed, they mention; for it hath been owing to that refinement of sentiment which the Christian religion hath produced, that this is at last understood to be a breach of natural morality. In the heathen world, it was never thought to be a crime, except it was accompanied with injury

to a virgin's honour, or with violation of the marriage bed. Abstinence in this instance was considered as a peculiarity of Judaism; and had it not been mentioned in the apostolical decree, the Gentile converts would not have been very ready to discern that the prohibition of this crime is included in the seventh commandment. But with regard to the Sabbath, although it was gone into disuse among the heathen long before the appearance of our Saviour, yet the most ignorant idolater observed some stated festivals in honour of the imaginary divinities to which his worship was addressed. When an idolater, therefore, was converted, the natural consequence of his conversion—that is, of his going over from the worship of idols to the worship of the true God,—the natural and immediate consequence would be, that he would observe the festival of the true God instead of the festival of his idol. Thus the Gentile convert would spontaneously adopt the observation of the Sabbath, as a natural duty—a branch, indeed, of that

most general commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." It was therefore as little necessary that the Sabbath should be expressly observed in the apostolical decree, as that express reservation should be made of any other of the ten commandments: nor is the neglect of the Sabbath more to be justified by the silence of the apostolical council concerning the necessity of the observation, than idolatry or blasphemy is to be justified by their silence about the second or the third commandment.

The argument, therefore, from the parallel antiquity of the injunction of a Sabbath and the prohibition of blood, rather goes to prove that the prohibition is in force, than to invalidate the conclusion of the perpetual sanctity of the Sabbath from the early date of the institution. Accordingly, it hath been the practice of very considerable men, within our own memory, to abstain, from conscientious scruples, from all meats prepared with the blood of animals, and from the flesh of animals otherwise killed than by the effusion of their blood.

The truth, however, seems to be, that the two ordinances, the observation of a Sabbath and abstinence from blood, although they were equally binding upon all mankind at the time when they were severally enjoined, differ nevertheless in this,—that the reason of the Sabbath continues invariably the same, or, if it changes at all, it hath been gaining rather than losing its importance from the first institution. The reason of the prohibition of blood was founded on the state of mankind before the coming of Christ, and was peculiar to those early ages. The use of the Sabbath, as it began, will end only with the world itself. The abstinence from blood was a part of that handwriting of ordinances to which sin gave a temporary importance, and which were blotted out when the Messiah made an end of sin by the expiatory sacrifice of the cross. I have already had occasion to remark, that it was the great end of the numerous sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual, to impress the Jewish people (for a season the chosen depositaries of revealed truth) with an

opinion of the necessity of a sanguinary expiation even for involuntary offences,—to train them to the habitual belief of that awful maxim, that "without blood there shall be no remission." The end of those earlier sacrifices, which were of use in the patriarchal ages, was unquestionably the same. To inculcate the same important lesson, in the earliest instance of a sacrifice upon record, respect was had to the shepherd's sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock, rather than to the husbandman's offering of the fruit of his ground; and for the same reason, by the prohibition laid upon the sons of Noah, and afterwards enforced in the severest terms in the Mosaic law, blood was sanctified, as it were, as the immediate instrument of atonement. The end of the prohibition was to impress mankind with a high reverence for blood, as a most holy thing, consecrated to the purpose of the general expiation: but this expiatory virtue belonged not to the blood of bulls and of goats, but to the blood of Christ, of which the other was by God's

appointment made a temporary emblem. As the importance, therefore, of all inferior sacrifices, and of all the cleansings and purifications of the law, ceased when once the only meritorious sacrifice had been offered on the cross, and the true atonement made, animal blood, at the same time, and for the same reason, lost its sanctity. The necessity, therefore, mentioned in the apostolic rescript, so far as it regards the restriction from the use of blood, can be understood only of a temporary necessity, founded on the charitable condescension, which, in the infancy of the church, was due from the Gentile converts to the inveterate prejudices of their Hebrew brethren. Accordingly, although we read of no subsequent decree of the apostolical college, rescinding the restriction which by the act of their first assembly they thought proper to impose, yet we find what is equivalent to a decree, in the express licence given by St Paul to the Christians of Corinth, to eat of whatever meat was set before them, provided they incurred not the imputation of idolatry,

by partaking of a feast upon the victim in an idol's temple. With this exception, they had permission to eat whatever was sold in the shambles, and whatever was served up at table, without any attention to the legal distinctions of clean and unclean, and without any anxious inquiry upon what occasion or in what manner the animals had been slaughtered.

Thus it appears, that the prohibition of blood in food was for a time indeed, by the generality of the restraint, binding upon all mankind: but, in the reason of the thing, its importance was but temporary; and when its importance ceased, the restraint was taken off,—not indeed by a decree of the whole college of apostles, but still by apostolical authority. The observation of a Sabbath, on the contrary, was not only a general duty at the time of the institution, but, in the nature of the thing, of perpetual importance; since, in every stage of the world's existence, it is man's interest to remember and his duty to acknowledge his dependence upon God as the Creator of all things,

and of man among the rest. The observation of a Sabbath was accordingly enforced, not by any apostolical decree, but by the example of the apostles after the solemn abrogation of the Mosaic law.

Thus, I trust, I have shown that the observation of a Sabbath, as it was of earlier institution than the religion of the Jews, and no otherwise belonged to Judaism, than as, with other ordinances of the patriarchal church, it was adopted by the Jewish legislature, necessarily survives the extinction of the Jewish law, and makes a part of Christianity. I have shown how essentially it differs from other ordinances, which, however they may boast a similar antiquity, and for a season an equal sanctity, were only of a temporary importance. I have shown that it is a part of the rational religion of man, in every stage and state of his existence, till he shall attain that happy rest from the toil of perpetual conflict with temptation—from the hardship of duty as a task, of which the rest of the Sabbath is itself a type. I have therefore

established my first proposition, that Christians stand obliged to the observation of a Sabbath. I am, in the next place, to inquire how far the Christian, in the observance of a Sabbath, is held to the original injunction of keeping every seventh day; and which day of the seven is his proper Sabbath. And this shall be the business of my next discourse.

SERMON XXIII.

MARK, ii. 27.

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

THE general application of this maxim of our Lord, as a rule establishing the true distinction between natural duties and positive institutions, I have already shown. I have already shown you, that, rightly understood, whatever pre-eminence in merit it may ascribe (as it ascribes indeed the greatest) to those things which are not good because they are commanded, but are commanded because they are in themselves good, it nevertheless as little justifies the neglect of the external ordinances

of religion as it warrants the hypocritical substitution of instituted forms for those higher duties which it teaches us to consider as the very end of our existence. In the particular inquiry which the text more immediately suggests, what regard may be due to the institution of the Sabbath under the Christian dispensation, I have so far proceeded, as to show, in opposition to an opinion which too visibly influences the practice of the present age, that Christians are indeed obliged to the observance of a Sabbath. It remains for me to inquire how far the Christian, in the observance of a Sabbath, is held to the original injunction of keeping every seventh day; and when I have shown you that this obligation actually remains upon him, I am, in the last place, to show in what manner his Sabbath should be kept.

The spirit of the Jewish law was rigour and severity. Rigour and severity were adapted to the rude manners of the first ages of mankind, and were particularly suited to the re-

fractory temper of the Jewish people. The rigour of the law itself was far outdone by the rigour of the popular superstition and the pharisaical hypocrisy,—if, indeed, superstition and hypocrisy, rather than a particular ill-will against our Lord, were the motives with the people and their rulers to tax him with a breach of the Sabbath, when they saw his power exerted on the Sabbath day for the relief of the afflicted. The Christian law is the law of liberty. We are not therefore to take the measure of our obedience from the letter of the Jewish law,—much less from Jewish prejudices and the suggestions of Jewish malignity. In the sanctification of the Sabbath, in particular, we have our Lord's express authority to take a pious discretion for our guide, keeping constantly in view the end of the institution, and its necessary subordination to higher duties. But, in the use of this discretion, I fear it is the fashion to indulge in a greater latitude than our Lord's maxims allow or his example warrants; and although the

letter of the Jewish law is not to be the Christian's guide, yet perhaps, in the present instance, the particular injunctions of the law, rationally interpreted by reference to the general end of the institution, will best enable us to determine what is the obligation to the observance of a particular day,—what the proper observation of the day may be,—and how far the practice of the present age corresponds with the purpose and spirit of the ordinance.

The injunction of the Sabbath, in the fourth commandment, is accompanied with the history and the reason of the original institution. Both the history and the reason given here are the same which occur in the second chapter of Genesis. The history is briefly this,—that "God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." "He hallowed it,"—that is, God himself distinguished this particular day, and set it apart from the rest; and "he blessed it,"—that is, he appropriated this day to religious exercises on the part of man; and he engaged, on his own part, to accept the homage which should

on this day be offered to him. He promised to be propitious to the prayers, public and private, which should be offered to him on this day in the true spirit of piety, humility, and faith. This is, I think, the import of the phrase that God "blessed the day." He annexed the promise of his especial blessing to the regular discharge of a duty enjoined. The reason of this sanctification of the seventh day was founded on the order in which the work of the creation had been carried on. In this business, we are told, the Divine power was active for six successive days; on the sixth day all was finished, and on the seventh God rested: his power was no longer exerted in the business of *making*, the whole world being now made, arranged, and finished.

From the reason thus assigned for the institution, it is easy to understand that the worship originally required of men on this day was to praise God as the Creator of the universe, and to acknowledge their dependence upon him and subjection to him as his creatures: and it is

evident that this worship is due to the Creator from all men, in all ages, since none in any age are not his creatures. The propriety of the particular appointment of every seventh day is also evident from the reason assigned, if the fact be as the letter of the sacred history represents it, that the creation was the gradual work of six days. It hath ever been the folly or the pride of man, to make a difficulty of every thing of which he hath not the penetration to discern the reason. It is very certain that God needs no time for the execution of his purposes. Had it so pleased him, the universe, in its finished form, with all its furniture and all its inhabitants, might have started into existence in a moment. To say "Let the world be;" had been as easy to God as "Let there be light;" and the effect must have followed. Hence, as if a necessity lay upon the Deity upon all occasions to do all to which his omnipotence extends,—or as if, on the contrary, it were not impossible that Infinite power should in any instance do its utmost (for what-

ever hath been done, more must be within its ability to perform, or it were not infinite),—unmindful of these principles, some have dreamed of I know not what figures and allegories in that part of the Mosaic history which describes the creation as a work performed in time and distributed into parts; imagining, in opposition to the letter of the story, that the whole must have been instantaneously accomplished. Others, with more discernment, have suspected, that when once the chaos was produced and the elements invested with their qualities, physical causes, which work their effect in time, were in some measure concerned in the progress of the business; the Divine power acting only at intervals, for certain purposes to which physical causes were insufficient, such as the division of the general chaos into distinct globes and systems, and the formation of the first plants and animals. These notions are indeed perfectly consistent with sound philosophy; nor am I aware that they are in any way repugnant to the sacred history:

but from these principles a conclusion has too hastily been drawn, that a week would be too short time for physical causes to accomplish their part of the business; and it has been imagined, that a day must be used figuratively in the history of the creation to denote at least a thousand years, or perhaps a longer period.

In what manner the creation was conducted, is a question about a fact, and, like all questions about facts, must be determined, not by theory, but by testimony; and if no testimony were extant, the fact must remain uncertain. But the testimony of the sacred historian is peremptory and explicit. No expressions could be found in any language to describe a gradual progress of the work for six successive days, and the completion of it on the sixth, in the literal and common sense of the word "day," more definite and unequivocal than those employed by Moses; and they who seek or admit figurative expositions of such expressions as these, seem to be not sufficiently aware, that it is one thing to write a history, and quite

another to compose riddles. The expressions in which Moses describes the days of the creation, literally rendered, are these: When he has described the first day's work, he says—"And there was morning and there was evening, one day;" when he has described the second day's work, "There was morning and there was evening, a second day;" when he has described the third day's work, "There was evening and there was morning, a third day." Thus, in the progress of his narrative, at the end of each day's work, he counts up the days which had passed off from the beginning of the business; and, to obviate all doubt what portion of time he meant to denote by the appellation of "a day," he describes each day of which the mention occurs as consisting of one evening and one morning, or, as the Hebrew words literally import, of the decay of light and the return of it. By what description could the word "day" be more expressly limited to its literal and common mean-

ing, as denoting that portion of time which is measured and consumed by the earth's revolution on her axis? That this revolution was performed in the same space of time in the beginning of the world as now, I would not over confidently affirm; but we are not at present concerned in the resolution of that question: a day, whatever was its space, was still the same thing in nature—a portion of time measured by the same motion, divisible into the same seasons of morning and noon, evening and midnight, and making the like part of longer portions of time measured by other motions. The day was itself marked by the vicissitudes of darkness and light; and so many times repeated, it made a month, and so many times more, a year. For six such days God was making the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that therein is; and rested on the seventh day. This fact, clearly established by the sacred writer's testimony, in the literal meaning of these plain words, abundantly evinces

the perpetual importance and propriety of consecrating one day in seven to the public worship of the Creator.

I say one day in seven. In the first ages of the world, the creation of the world was the benefaction by which God was principally known, and for which he was chiefly to be worshipped. The Jews, in their religious assemblies, had to commemorate other blessings —the political creation of their nation out of Abraham's family, and their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. We Christians have to commemorate, beside the common benefit of the creation, the transcendent blessing of our redemption—our new creation to the hope of everlasting life, of which our Lord's resurrection to life on the first day of the week is a sure pledge and evidence. You see, therefore, that the Sabbath, in the progress of ages, hath acquired new ends, by new manifestations of the Divine mercy; and these new ends justify correspondent alterations of the original institution. It has been imagined that a change

was made of the original day by Moses—that the Sabbath was transferred by him from the day on which it had been originally kept in the patriarchal ages, to that on which the Israelites left Egypt. The conjecture is not unnatural; but it is, in my judgment, a mere conjecture, of which the sacred history affords neither proof nor confutation. This, however, is certain, that upon our Lord's resurrection, the Sabbath was transferred, in memory of that event, the great foundation of the Christian's hopes, from the last to the first day of the week. The alteration seems to have been made by the authority of the apostles, and to have taken place on the very day on which our Lord arose; for on that day the apostles were assembled, and on that day sennight we find them assembled again. The celebration of these two first Sundays was honoured with our Lord's own presence. It was perhaps to set a mark of distinction upon this day in particular, that the intervening week passed off, as it should seem, without any repetition of his first visit to

the eleven apostles. From that time, the Sunday was the constant Sabbath of the primitive church. The Christian, therefore, who devoutly sanctifies one day in seven, although it be the first day of the week, not the last, as was originally ordained, may rest assured that he fully satisfies the spirit of the ordinance. Had the propriety of the alteration been less apparent than it is from the reason of the thing, the authority of the apostles to loose and bind was absolute.

I must remark, however, that their authority upon this point was exercised not purely in consideration of the expediency, but upon the higher consideration of the necessity of a change,—a necessity arising, as I conceive, out of the original spirit of the institution. The original observation of a Sabbath on every seventh day was a public and distinguishing characteristic of the worship of the Creator, who finished his work in six days, and rested on the seventh. This was the public character by which the worship of the true God

was distinguished, that his festival returned every seventh day; and, by the strict observance of this ordinance, the holy patriarchs, and the Jews their descendants, made as it were a public protestation once in every week against the errors of idolatry, which, instead of the true God, the Creator of the universe, paid its adoration either to the works of God, the sun and moon and other celestial bodies, or to mere figments of the human imagination, misled by a diabolical illusion—to imaginary beings presiding over the natural elements, or the departed ghosts of deceased kings and heroes—and, in the last stage of the corruption, to inanimate images, by which the supposed influences of the celestial bodies and physical qualities of the elements were emblematically represented, and the likenesses of the deified kings supposed to be pourtrayed. To this protestation against heathenism, the propriety of which binds the worshippers of the true God in all ages to a weekly Sabbath, it is reasonable that Christians should add a similar

protestation against Judaism. It was necessary that Christians should openly separate as it were from the communion of the Jews, who, after their perverse rejection of our Lord, ceased to be the true church of God: and the sanctification of the Saturday being the most visible and notorious character of the Jewish worship, it was necessary that the Christian Sabbath should be transferred to some other day of the week. A change of the day being for these reasons necessary, the choice of the apostles was directed to the first day of the week, as that on which our Lord's resurrection finished and sealed the work of our redemption; so that, in the same act by which we acknowledge the Creator, and protest against the claims of the Jews to be still the depositaries of the true religion, we might confess the Saviour whom the Jews crucified.

You have now seen that the Christian clearly stands obliged to the observance of a Sabbath, —that, in the observance of his Sabbath, he is held to the original institution of keeping every

seventh day,—and that his proper Sabbath is the first day of the seven. By keeping a Sabbath, we acknowledge a God, and declare that we are not atheists; by keeping one day in seven, we protest against idolatry, and acknowledge *that* God who in the beginning made the heavens and the earth; and by keeping our Sabbath on the first of the week, we protest against Judaism, and acknowledge *that* God who, having made the world, sent his only begotten Son to redeem mankind. The observation, therefore, of the Sunday in the Christian church, is a public weekly assertion of the two first articles in our Creed—the belief in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

I must not quit this part of my subject without briefly taking notice of a text in St Paul's epistle to the Colossians, which has been supposed to contradict the whole doctrine which I have asserted, and to prove that the observation of a Sabbath in the Christian church

is no point of duty, but a matter of mere compliance with an ancient custom. In the second chapter of that epistle, St Paul, speaking of "the handwriting of ordinances which is blotted out, having been nailed to the Redeemer's cross," adds, in the sixteenth verse, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." From this text, no less a man than the venerable Calvin drew the conclusion, in which he has been rashly followed by other considerable men, that the sanctification of the seventh day is no indispensible duty in the Christian church,—that it is one of those carnal ordinances of the Jewish religion which our Lord hath blotted out. The truth however is, that, in the apostolical age, the first day of the week, though it was observed with great reverence, was not called the Sabbath day, but the Lord's day,—that the separation of the Christian church from the Jewish communion might be marked by the nam well as by the day of their weekly fes-

tival; and the name of the Sabbath days was appropriated to the Saturdays, and certain days in the Jewish church which were likewise called Sabbaths in the law, because they were observed with no less sanctity. The Sabbath days, therefore, of which St Paul in this passage speaks, were not the Sundays of the Christians, but the Saturdays and the other Sabbaths of the Jewish calendar. The Judaizing heretics, with whom St Paul was all his life engaged, were strenuous advocates for the observation of these Jewish festivals in the Christian church; and his (St Paul's) admonition to the Colossians is, that they should not be disturbed by the censures of those who reproached them for neglecting to observe these Jewish Sabbaths with Jewish ceremonies. It appears from the first epistle to the Corinthians, that the Sunday was observed in the church of Corinth with St Paul's own approbation. It appears from the Apocalypse, that it was generally observed in the time when that book was written by St John; and it is

mentioned by the earliest apologists of the Christian faith, as a necessary branch of Christian worship. But the Sabbaths of the Jewish church are abolished; nor is the Christian, in the observation of his own Sabbath, to conduct himself by the childish rules of the old pharisaical superstition. This brings me to consider, in the last place, the manner in which the Christian Sabbath is to be kept.

As the reason of the institution rests on such common benefits as the creation of the world and man's redemption, it is evident that all descriptions of men stand obliged to the duties of the day. No elevation of rank may exempt; no meanness of condition may exclude; no inexperience of youth disqualifies for the task; no decrepitude of age is unequal to the toil; no weakness of sex can suffer from the fatigue. Since the proper Business of the day thus engages every rank, every sex, and every age, it is evident that it requires a suspension of the ordinary business of the world; for none can be at leisure for secular employments

when all are occupied as they ought to be in devotion. All servile labour and all worldly business was accordingly prohibited by the Mosaic law, under the highest penalties; and capital punishment was, in an early instance, actually inflicted on a man who only went out on the Sabbath to gather sticks for fuel. Christian magistrates have not only the permission, they have the injunction of our Lord—they have the authority at least of inference from the example of what he did himself, and what he justified when done by his disciples, to remit much of the rigour of this interdiction. Such a cessation, however, of business and of pleasure, should be enforced, as may leave neither necessity nor temptation upon any denomination of men in the community to neglect the proper observance of the festival. It is to be remembered, that although the worship of God is the chief end of the institution, yet the refreshment of the lowest ranks of mankind, by an intermission of their labours, is indisputably a secondary object. "Thou shalt rest on the

seventh day," said the law, "that the son of thy handmaid and the stranger may be refreshed." A handmaid, in the language of the Old Testament, denotes a female slave. The son of a handmaid therefore is the offspring of a female slave, which, by the laws of the Jews, as of all people among whom slavery hath been allowed, was the property of the master of the mother. The stranger seems here to be set in opposition to the homeborn slave, denoting a foreign slave bought with money or taken in war. These two descriptions of the homeborn and the foreign slave comprehend the whole of that oppressed and helpless order of mankind. It is expressly provided by the law, that on the Sabbath day this harassed race of mortals should have their refreshment. Now, as these injunctions were evidently founded on the general principles of philanthropy, it should seem, that allowance being made for the difference between the rigour of the Jewish and the liberality of the Christian dispensation,—and allowance being also made for the diffe-

rent circumstances of the ancient and the modern world,—these injunctions of the suspension of the labours of the lower ranks are universally and perpetually in force, in all parts of the world, and in all ages; the rather as they are no less calculated for the benefit of the higher than for the comfort of the lower orders. It is useful to both to be admonished at frequent intervals,—the one for their consolation, the other for the suppression of that pride which a condition of ease and superiority is too apt to inspire. It is useful to both to be reminded of their equal relation to their common Lord, as the creatures of his power—the subjects of his government—the children of his love, by an institution which at frequent intervals unites them in his service. Under this recollection, the servant will obey with fidelity and cheerfulness, and the superior will govern with kindness and lenity. It is of the highest importance to the present good humour of society, and to the future interests of men of every rank, that these injunctions should be

observed with all the exactness which the present state of society may admit.

The labour of man is not the only toil which the Mosaic law prohibited on the Sabbath day. "On the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest." It was a principle with some of the heathen moralists, that no rights subsist between man and the lower animals,—that, in the exercise of our dominion over them, we are at liberty to pursue our own profit and convenience, without any consideration of the fatigue and the miseries which they may undergo. The holy Scriptures seem to speak another language, when they say "The righteous man is merciful even to his beast;" and as no reason can be alleged why the ox or the ass of Palestine should be treated with more tenderness than the kindred brutes of other countries, it must be upon this general principle, that mercy is in some degree due to the animals beneath us, that the Divine legislator of the Jews provided on the Sabbath for their refreshment. This, therefore, like the

former provision (allowance still being made for the different spirit of Judaism and Christianity), is to be considered as a general and standard part of the institution, which is violated whenever, for the mere pleasure and convenience of the master and the owner, either servants, or even animals, are subjected to the same severity of toil on the Sabbath, which belongs to the natural condition of the one and to the civil rank of the other on the six days of the week. On the Sabbath, man is to hold a sort of edifying communion with the animals beneath him, acknowledging, by a short suspension of his dominion over them, the right of the Creator in himself as well as in them, and confessing that his own right over them is derived from the grant of the superior Lord.

It appears from what has been said, that the practice, which is become so common in this country among all ranks of men, of making long journies on the Sabbath day without any urgent necessity, is one of the highest breaches

of this holy institution. It breaks in upon the principal business of the day, laying some under a necessity, and furnishing others with a pretence for withdrawing themselves from the public assemblies; and it defeats the ordinance in its subordinate ends, depriving servants and cattle of that temporary exemption from fatigue which it was intended both should enjoy. This, like other evils, hath arisen from small beginnings; and by an unperceived, because a natural and a gradual growth, hath attained at last an alarming height. Persons of the higher ranks, whether from a certain vanity of appearing great, by assuming a privilege of doing what was generally forbidden, or for the convenience of travelling when the roads were the most empty, began, within our own memory, to make their journies on a Sunday. In a commercial country, the great fortunes acquired in trade have a natural tendency to level all distinctions but what arise from affluence. Wealth supplies the place of nobility: birth retains only the privilege of setting the first

example. The city presently catches the manners of the court, and the vices of the high-born peer are faithfully copied in the life of the opulent merchant and the thriving tradesman. Accordingly, in the space of a few years, the Sunday became the travelling day of all who travel in their own carriages. But why should the humbler citizen, whose scantier means oblige him to commit his person to the crammed stage-coach, more than his wealthier neighbour, be exposed to the hardship of travelling on the working days, when the multitude of heavy carts and waggons moving to and fro in all directions renders the roads unpleasant and unsafe to all carriages of a slighter fabric; especially when the only real inconvenience, the danger of such obstructions, is infinitely increased to him, by the greater difficulty with which the vehicle in which he makes his uncomfortable journey crosses out of the way, in deep and miry roads, to avoid the fatal jostle? The force of these principles was soon perceived; and, in open

defiance of the laws, stage-coaches have for several years travelled on the Sundays. The waggoner soon understands that the road is as free for him as for the coachman,—that if the magistrate connives at the one he cannot enforce the law against the other; and the Sunday traveller now breaks the Sabbath without any advantage gained in the safety or pleasure of his journey. It may seem, that the evil, grown to this height, would become its own remedy: but this is not the case. The temptation, indeed, to the crime, among the higher ranks of the people, subsists no longer; but the reverence for the day among all orders is extinguished, and the abuse goes on from the mere habit of profaneness. In the country, the roads are crowded on the Sunday, as on any other day, with travellers of every sort: the devotion of the villages is interrupted by the noise of the carriages passing through, or stopping at the inns for refreshment. In the metropolis, instead of that solemn stillness of the vacant streets in the hours of the public ser-

vice, which might suit, as in our fathers' days, with the sanctity of the day, and be a reproof to every one who should stir abroad but upon the business of devotion, the mingled racket of worldly business and pleasure is going on with little abatement; and in the churches and chapels which adjoin the public streets, the sharp rattle of the whirling phæton, and the graver rumble of the loaded waggon, mixed with the oaths and imprecations of the brawling drivers, disturb the congregation and stun the voice of the preacher.

These scandals call loudly for redress: but redress will be in vain expected from any increased severity of the laws, without a concurrence of the willing example of the great. This is one of the many instances in which a corrupt fashion in the higher orders of society will render all law weak and ineffectual. I am not without hope that the example of the great will not be wanting. I trust that we are awakened to a sense of the importance of religious ordinances, by the dreadful exhibition of

the mischiefs of irreligion in the present state of the neighbouring apostate nation; and though our recovery from the disease of carelessness and indifference is yet in its beginning, appearances justify a sanguine hope of its continuance, and of its ultimate termination, through the grace of God, in a perfect convalescence: and when once the duties of religion shall be recommended by the general example of the superior ranks, then, and not till then, the bridle of legal restraint will act with effect upon vulgar profligacy.

But, in the application of whatever means for the remedy of the evil,—whether of legal penalties, which ought to be enforced, and in some cases ought to be heightened,—or of the milder persuasion of example—or of the two united, which alone can be successful,—in the application of these various means, the zeal of reform, if it would not defeat its own end, must be governed and moderated by a prudent attention to the general spirit of Christianity, and to the general end of the institution. The

spirit of Christianity is rational, manly, and ingenuous; in all cases delighting in the substantial works of judgment, justice, and mercy, more than in any external forms. The primary and general end of the institution is the public worship of God, the Creator of the world and Redeemer of mankind.

Among the Jews, the absolute cessation of all animal activity on their Sabbath had a particular meaning in reference to their history: it was a standing symbolical memorial of their miraculous deliverance from a state of servitude. But to mankind in general—to us Christians in some degree, the proper business of the day is the worship of God in public assemblies, from which none may without some degree of crime be unnecessarily absent. Private devotion is the Christian's daily duty; but the peculiar duty of the Sabbath is public worship. As for those parts of the day which are not occupied in the public duty, every man's own conscience, without any interference of public authority, and certainly without any

officious interposition of the private judgment of his neighbour,—every man's own conscience must direct him what portion of this leisure should be allotted to his private devotions, and what may be spent in sober recreation. Perhaps a better general rule cannot be laid down than this,—that the same proportion of the Sabbath, on the whole, should be devoted to religious exercises, public and private, as every man would spend of any other day in his ordinary business. The holy work of the Sabbath, like all other work, to be done well requires intermissions. An entire day is a longer space of time than the human mind can employ with alacrity upon any one subject. The austerity therefore of those is little to be commended, who require that all the intervals of public worship, and whatever remains of the day after the public duty is satisfied, should be spent in the closet, in private prayer and retired meditation. Nor are persons in the lower ranks of society to be very severely censured—those especially who are confined to

populous cities, where they breathe a noxious atmosphere, and are engaged in unwholesome occupations, from which, with their daily subsistence, they derive their daily poison—if they take advantage of the leisure of the day to recruit their wasted strength and harassed spirits, by short excursions into the purer air of the adjacent villages, and the innocent recreations of sober society; provided they engage not in schemes of dissipated and tumultuous pleasure, which may disturb the sobriety of their thoughts, and interfere with the duties of the day. The present humour of the common people leads perhaps more to a profanation of the festival than to a superstitious rigour in the observance of it: but, in the attempt to reform, we shall do wisely to remember, that the thanks for this are chiefly due to the base spirit of puritanical hypocrisy, which in the last century opposed and defeated the wise attempts of government to regulate the recreations of the day by authority, and prevent the excesses which have actually taken place, by a rational indulgence.

The Sabbath was ordained for a day of public worship, and of refreshment to the common people. It cannot be a day of their refreshment, if it be made a day of mortified restraint. To be a day of worship, it must be a day of leisure from worldly business, and of abstraction from dissipated pleasure: but it need not be a dismal one. It was ordained for a day of general and willing resort to the holy mountain; when men of every race, and every rank, and every age, promiscuously—Hebrew, Greek, and Scythian—bond and free—young and old—high and low—rich and poor—one with another—laying hold of Christ's atonement, and the proffered mercy of the gospel, might meet together before their common Lord, exempt for a season from the cares and labours of the world, and be "joyful in his house of prayer."

SERMON XXIV.

JOHN, iv. 42.

"*We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*"

'Twas in an early period of our Saviour's ministry—in the beginning of the first year of it, shortly after his first public appearance at Jerusalem, that the good people of the town of Sychar in Samaria, where he made a short visit of two days in his journey home to Galilee, bore that remarkable testimony to the truth of his pretensions, which is recorded in my text. "We have heard him ourselves," they say to the woman of their town to whom

he had first revealed himself at the well by the entrance of the city, and who had first announced him to her countrymen. "We no longer rely upon your report: we ourselves have heard him. We have heard him propounding his pure maxims of morality—inculcating his lessons of sublime and rational religion—proclaiming the glad tidings of his Father's peace. We ourselves have heard him; and we are convinced that this person is indeed what he declares himself to be: we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world, the Christ."

This profession consists, you see, of two parts. The terms in which it is stated imply a previous expectation of these Samaritans of a Christ who should come; and declare a conviction that Jesus was that person. It is very remarkable in three circumstances.

First, for the persons from whom it came. They were not Jews: they were Samaritans,—a race of spurious Israelites sprung from the forbidden marriages of Jews with heathen families,—a nation who, although they professed

indeed to worship the God of Abraham after the rites of the Mosaic law, yet, as it should seem from the censure that was passed upon them by a discerning and a candid judge, "that they worshipped they knew not what," —as it should seem, I say, from this censure, they had but very imperfect notions of the nature of the Deity they served; and they were but ill instructed in the true spirit of the service which they paid him. These were the persons who were so captivated with the sublimity of our Saviour's doctrines, as to declare that he who had so admirably discoursed them could be no other than the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

The second thing to be remarked, is the very just notion these Samaritans express of the office of the Christ whom they expected,—that he should be the Saviour of the world. In the original language of the New Testament, there are more words than one which are rendered by the word "world" in the English Bible. One of these is a word which, though it pro-

perly signifies the whole of the habitable globe, is often used in a more confined sense by those later Greek writers who were subjects of the Roman empire and treat of the affairs of the Romans. By these writers, it is often used for so much only of the world as was comprised within the limits of the Roman empire. It has been imagined that the evangelists, following in this particular the example of the politer writers of their times, have used this same word to denote what was peculiarly *their* world, the territory of Judea. Men of learning in these later ages have been much too fond of the practice of framing expositions of Scripture upon these grammatical refinements. The observation may be partly just: in many instances, however, it hath been misapplied; and I would advise the unlearned reader of the English Bible, wherever the *world* is mentioned, to take the word in its most natural —that is in its most extended meaning. This rule will seldom mislead him; and the few instances in which it may be incorrect, are

certain passages of history in which exactness of interpretation is not of great—at least not of general importance. In the text, however, at present before us, the original word is not that which is supposed to be capable of a limited interpretation. On the contrary, it is that word which is used by the sacred writers to denote the mass of the unconverted Gentile world, as distinguished from God's peculiar people. Of this world, therefore, and by consequence of the whole world, the Samaritans, as it appears by the text, expected in the Christ the Saviour. It appears, too, from the particulars of our Saviour's conference with the woman at the well, which are related in the preceding part of this chapter,—it appears, that of the means by which the Messiah was to effect the salvation of the world, these same people had a very just, though perhaps an inadequate apprehension. They expected him to save the world by teaching the true religion. "I know," said the woman, "when the Messiah is come, he will tell us all things,"—all

things concerning the worship of God; for that was the topic in discussion. The circumstances which the evangelist's narrative discovers of this woman's former life, give us no reason to suppose that she had been a person of a very thoughtful religious turn of mind, which had led her to be particularly inquisitive after the true meaning of the prophecies. It is to be supposed, therefore, that the notions which she expressed were the common notions of her country. It was the notion, therefore, of the Samaritans of this age, that teaching men the true religion would be in great part the means which the Messiah would employ for the general salvation of mankind: and since this was their notion of the means by which the Messiah's salvation should be effected, they must have placed the salvation itself in such a deliverance as these means were naturally fitted to accomplish,—in a deliverance of mankind from the corruptions which ignorance, hypocrisy, and superstition had introduced in morals and religion, and particularly in the rites of exter-

nal worship. Another thing appears by the woman's profession,—that the Samaritans were aware that the time was actually come for this deliverer's appearance. Jesus had said to her —"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." The woman took this declaration in its true meaning. She answered, "I know"—(these words in the beginning of the woman's answer are opposed to those in which our Saviour had bespoken her attention, "Believe me.") "You have my belief," she said. "I know you tell me what is true; I know that the Messiah is just now coming (that is the precise meaning of the original words); I know that the appointed time is come—that the Messiah must presently arrive; and I know that when that person is come, he will tell us all things." Great and innumerable are the mysteries of godliness. These Samaritans, who knew not what they worshipped, had truer notions of the Messiah's office, and

of the nature and extent of the deliverance he was to work, than the Jews had, who for many ages had been the chosen depositaries of the oracles of God. The Samaritans looked for a spiritual, not a temporal—for an universal, not a national deliverance; and, by a just interpretation of the signs of the times, they were apprized, that the time in which Jesus of Nazareth arose was the season marked by the prophetic spirit for the Messiah's appearance. Attend, I beseech you, to this extraordinary fact, deduced, if I mistake not, with the highest evidence, from the public profession of the Sycharites which is contained in my text, connected with the particular professions of the woman. This fact will lead us to interesting speculations, and to conclusions of the highest importance. The use I would at present make of it, is only to admonish you, by this striking instance, of how little benefit what are called the external means of grace may prove—the advantages even of a Divine revelation,—of how little benefit they may prove to those whose

minds are occupied with adverse prejudices, or who trust so far to that partial favour of the Deity, of which they erroneously conceive the advantages of their present situation to be certain signs, as to be negligent of their own improvement. On the other hand, you see what a proficiency may be made, by God's blessing, on the diligent use of scanty talents. The Samaritans, you see, who were not included in the commonwealth of Israel, who had no light but what came to them obliquely, as it were, by an irregular reflection from the Jewish temple —no instruction but that of fugitive priests, and under the protection of a heathen prince,— these Samaritans had so far improved under this imperfect discipline, as to attain views of the promised redemption, of which the Jews themselves missed, whom the merciful providence of God had placed under the immediate tuition of Moses and the prophets.

I return to the analysis of my text. The third circumstance to be remarked in this profession of the Sycharites, is the great warmth

and energy of expression with which they declare their conviction that Jesus was that universal Saviour whose arrival at this season they expected. "We *know*," they say to the woman (this word expresses an assurance of the mind far stronger than belief.) "We give entire credit to your report. But your assertion is no longer the ground of our belief; our persuasion goes far beyond any belief founded upon the testimony of a third person. We believe your report; but we believe it because we ourselves have heard him: and we know and can maintain, each of us upon his own proper knowledge and conviction, that this person is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Would God, that all who now name the name of Christ, I had almost said, were Sycharites! But would God, they all were animated with that full-grown confidence of faith, which, in a visit of two days, our great Master's preaching had raised to such strength and maturity in the honest hearts of these half-taught Samaritans!

These facts, then, are clearly deducible from the text,—that the Samaritans of our Saviour's day, no less than the more instructed Jews, expected a Messiah,—that they knew, no less than the Jews, that the time was come for his appearance,—that, in the Messiah, they expected not, like the mistaking Jews, a Saviour of the Jewish nation only, or of Abraham's descendants, but of the world—a Saviour of the world from moral rather than from physical evil.

Of these facts, I may hereafter, with God's gracious assistance, endeavour to investigate the causes. The speculation will be no less improving than curious. It will give us occasion to inquire by what means God had provided that something of a miraculous, beside the natural witness of himself, should remain among the Gentiles in the darkest ages of idolatry. We shall find, if I mistake not, that a miraculous testimony of God, as the tender parent of mankind, founded upon early revelations and wide-spread prophecies, beside

that testimony which the works of nature bear to him as the universal Lord, was ever existing in the heathen world, although for many ages the one was little regarded and the other lay buried and concealed. We shall, besides, have occasion to consider and to explain many prophecies that lie scattered in the books of Moses. When I have shown you what were the foundations of the previous faith of the Samaritans in the Messiah to come, I may then proceed to inquire upon what evidence the people of Sychar were induced to believe that Jesus was the expected person. But, as these topics will require some accuracy and length of disquisition, I shall for the present decline them; and I shall bring my present discourse to a conclusion, when I have mentioned and considered a difficulty which some find in the story of our Lord's visit to the town of Sychar, and of his conference with the woman at the well,—and which they think a great one, though, in my judgment, it is either altogether groundless, or, if it have any foundation, it is never

theless entirely removed by the discovery which my text makes of the state of the Samaritans' faith at the time of our Lord's appearance. Whence was it, it hath been said, that Jesus, who declared himself not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, should, to these Samaritans (a race which, in a more advanced period of his ministry, he ranked with Gentiles, when he first sent his apostles out to announce the approach of the kingdom of heaven, forbidding them to go into any Gentile province, or to enter any Samaritan town),—whence was it, that in this early period, to these Samaritans, and in particular, to a woman of that country whose character at that time was not irreproachable, whatever her succeeding life might be when she became a disciple of our Lord,—whence was it, that at this early period, in this country, and to this woman, our Lord declared himself more explicitly than it is supposed he had yet done in any part of Judea, or even in private among his own disciples?

Perhaps the supposition which creates this difficulty—the supposition that Jesus had not declared himself explicitly, either among the Jews in general, or to any of his disciples in private—may be unfounded;—at least, it is no proof that it is true, that we read not in any of the four evangelists, that Jesus had, at any time before this interview with the Sycharite woman, said to any one, either in public or in private, "I am the Messiah." To those who consider the abridged manner in which the evangelists have written—in which they professed to write the story of their Master's life, omitting many more incidents than they have related,—to those who consider this circumstance, it will be no argument that no declaration equally explicit had been previously made, that none such is recorded. The important transactions of the whole interval between our Lord's baptism and his return into Galilee after the first passover, which are contained in the four first chapters of St John's gospel, the three other evangelists have alto-

gether passed by: and those who are read in history, either sacred or prophane, well know, that the negative of any probable fact is never to be concluded from the silence and omission even of the most accurate and exact historians. From the narrative contained in the three first chapters of St John's gospel, my conclusion, I confess, would be, that our blessed Saviour from the very first was sufficiently explicit, with his select associates, upon the general point of his pretensions, and neither at Jerusalem nor in Galilee at all reserved in public. But, granting the truth of the supposition upon which the difficulty is raised, I say the solution of the difficulty is easy to be found, in the view which the text displays of the religious opinions of the Samaritans at the time of our Lord's visit to the town of Sychar. The Samaritans, at that time, had truer notions of the Messiah's character and office—I will not say than any that were commonly to be found among the Jews—but I will say, than any one even of the apostles had, before their minds

were enlightened by the Holy Spirit, after our Lord's ascension. Now, we are told that it is one of the maxims of God's government, "that to him that hath"—to him that hath acquisitions of his own, made by an assiduous improvement of his talents, by a studious cultivation of his natural endowments, and a diligent use of the external means of knowledge which have been afforded him—"to him shall be given" the means of greater attainments; "but from him that hath not"—from him who can show no fruits of his own industry—"from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." This unprofitable servant, in the natural course of things, and by the just judgment of God, shall lose the advantages which through sloth and indolence he hath neglected to improve. By this maxim, every particular person's rank and station will be determined in the world to come. If it is not constantly observed in the present world, the necessity of departing from it is either the result of that disorder and irregularity which

man's degeneracy hath introduced, or it may be an essential part of the constitution of a probationary state. Still, in general, it is reasonable to suppose that the external light of revelation, like the internal influences of the Spirit, when no particular good purposes of Providence are to be answered by a more arbitrary and unequal distribution of it,—in general, it is reasonable to suppose, that it is dispensed to different persons in proportion to the inclination and ability to profit by it which the searcher of hearts discerns in each. Where, then, is the wonder, that our Saviour should declare himself so openly to these honest Sycharites, who were then earnestly looking for the great redemption, whose hearts were ready and whose understandings were prepared to receive such a deliverer as Jesus pretended to be—to acknowledge the Christ, the Son of God, although he came in the form of a servant? Where is the wonder that he should make this great discovery in the first instance to a weak woman, laden with the follies of her

youth, if, notwithstanding the irregularity of her past life, he discovered in her heart a soil in which his holy doctrine might take root and flourish? The restriction laid upon the apostles, in their first mission, not to visit the Samaritans, was probably founded on reasons of policy, not on any dislike of the Samaritans. It might have obstructed the accomplishment of our Saviour's great design, had the Samaritan multitude at that time risen on his side; as the Jewish multitude, if I conjecture aright, was ripe to rise, had he declared himself the temporal Messiah which they expected. But how, then, would man's redemption have been effected, which required that his blood should flow for our crime—that he, as the representative of guilty man, should suffer capital punishment as a criminal? It was probably for this reason that the public call was not to be given to Samaria in his lifetime, lest Samaria should obey it. This, at least, seems consistent with the general politics of our Saviour's life; for it is very remarkable, that as he grew in

public fame, he became more reserved with his friends and more open with his enemies. This appears in a very striking manner in the circumstances of his last journey to Jerusalem, when he went up thither to return home no more till he had finished the great atonement. From Galilee, where his friends were numerous and his party strong, he stole away in secret: through Samaria, where he was then less known, he made a more public progress: Jerusalem, where the faction of his enemies prevailed, he entered in open triumph: in the temple, he bid defiance to the chief priests and rulers; telling them, that if, at their request, he should silence the acclamations of his followers (which he refused to do), the stones of the building would proclaim his titles, and salute the present Deity. From similar motives, it may reasonably be presumed, our Saviour, in the beginning of his ministry, honoured the forward faith of the Samaritans with an open avowal of his person and his office. In a more advanced period, bent on the speedy

execution of his great design, he would not call them to his party, lest, by securing his person, they should thwart his purpose.

And now, from these contrasted examples of Samaritan faith and Jewish blindness, let every one take encouragement, and let every one learn the necessity of assiduity in self-improvement. Does any one whose thoughtless heart has hitherto been set upon the lust of the eye, the pomp of the world, or the pride of life, begin now to perceive the importance of futurity? Does any one whom the violence of passion hath carried into atrocious crimes, which repetition hath rendered habitual and familiar, begin to perceive his danger?—would he wish to escape it, if an escape were possible?—Let him then not be discouraged by any enormities of his preceding life. To become Christ's disciple, every one who wishes is permitted: every one's past sins are forgiven from the moment that he resolves to conform to the precepts and example of his Saviour. *He* who made an open discovery of himself—

an early proffer of salvation to a people who, though not idolaters, had but imperfectly known the Father,—*he* who, in a conference, the occasion of which was evidently of his own seeking, revealed himself to a woman living in impure concubinage with the sixth man she had called her husband,—*he* who forgave the sinner that perfumed his feet and bathed them with the tears of her repentance,—*he* who absolved the adultress taken in the fact,—*he* who called Saul the persecutor to be a pillar and an apostle of the faith he had so cruelly oppressed,—*he* who from the cross bore the penitent companion of his last agonies to paradise,—*HE* hath said—and you have seen how his actions accorded with his words—*he* hath said—"Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." "Him that cometh to me in humility and penitence, I will in nowise cast out. In nowise,—in no resentment of any crimes, not even of blasphemy and infidelity previous to his coming, will I exclude him from the light of my doctrine—from the benefits of my

atonement—from the glories of my kingdom." Come, therefore, unto him, all ye that are heavy laden with your sins. By his own gracious voice he called you while on earth: by the voice of his ambassadors he continueth to call; he calleth you now by mine. Come unto him, and he shall give you rest,—rest from the hard servitude of sin and appetite and guilty fear. *That* yoke is heavy,—*that* burthen is intolerable: *his* yoke is easy, and *his* burthen light. But come in sincerity;—dare not to come in hypocrisy and dissimulation. Think not that it will avail you in the last day, to have called yourselves Christians—to have been born and educated under the gospel light—to have lived in the external communion of the church on earth,—if all the while your hearts have holden no communion with its Head in heaven. If, instructed in Christianity, and professing to believe its doctrines, ye lead the lives of unbelievers, it will avail you nothing in the next, to have enjoyed in this world, like the Jews of old, advantages which

ye despised,—to have had the custody of a holy doctrine, which never touched your hearts—of a pure commandment, by the light of which ye never walked. To those who disgrace the doctrine of their Saviour by the scandal of their lives, it will be of no avail to have vainly called him "Lord, Lord!"

SERMON XXV.

JOHN, iv. 42.

"*We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*"

Such was the testimony which, in an early period of our Saviour's ministry, the good people of the town of Sychar in Samaria bore to the truth of his pretensions. They make, you see, a double profession,—first, of a previous faith in a Christ that was to come; then, of a faith now wrought in them by the preaching of Jesus, that Jesus himself was the person they expected.

From this public confession of the Sycharites, connected with the sentiments which had been expressed by a woman of the same town, in her private conference with our Lord at Jacob's well, these facts, as I showed you in my last discourse, may readily be deduced: that the Samaritans of our Saviour's day, with advantage of less light from revelation, no less than the more instructed Jews expected a Messiah,—that they knew, no less than the Jews, that the time was come for his appearance,—that, in the Messiah who was now to come, they expected not, like the mistaking Jews, a Saviour of the Jewish nation only, or of Abraham's descendants, but of the world,—that they expected a Saviour of the world from moral evil—from the misery of sin and guilt—from the corruptions of ignorance, hypocrisy, and superstition.

Of these facts, I now purpose to investigate the causes. I am to inquire, therefore, first, on what grounds the previous faith which we find in the Samaritans—their faith in a Christ

to come, was founded; and, in the next place, what particular evidence might produce their conviction that Jesus was the person they expected actually arrived.

The first question, what were the grounds of their previous faith, may seem naturally to divide itself into two parts,—as it respects this previous faith in that part which was peculiar to the Samaritans; or in that more general part of it in which they only concurred in the universal expectation of all the civilized nations of the world. The expectation of an extraordinary person who should arise about this time in Judea, and be the instrument of great improvements in the manners and condition of mankind, was almost, if not altogether universal at the time of our Saviour's birth; and had been gradually spreading and getting strength for some time before it. The fact is so notorious to all who have any knowledge of antiquity, that it is needless to attempt any proof of it. It may be assumed as a principle which even an infidel of candour would be

ashamed to deny; or, if any one would deny it, I would decline all dispute with such an adversary, as too ignorant to receive conviction, or too disingenuous to acknowledge what he must secretly admit. This general expectation was common, therefore, to the Samaritans with other nations: and, so far as it was common, it must be traced to some common source; for causes can never be less general than their effects. What was peculiar to the Samaritans, was the just notion which is expressed in my text, and in the private professions of the Sycharite woman, of the nature and extent of the benefits men were to receive from the expected deliverer, and of the means by which the deliverance was to be accomplished.

The subject, therefore, before us, in its first general branch, the inquiry into the grounds of the previous faith of the Samaritans, appears, in this view of it, to be of vast extent and comprehension: for to give the question a complete discussion, and to conduct the in-

quiry in what might seem the most natural order, it would be necessary to consider, first, the general grounds of the expectation which so generally prevailed; and afterwards, to inquire from what particular sources the Samaritans drew these just views of the Messiah's business which they have been found to entertain. The investigation of the first question would carry us into deep disquisitions of theological antiquities.

It is not much my practice to shrink from difficulties; nor can I bring myself to believe that common people are so incompetent as they are generally supposed to be to comprehend whatever the preacher will be at the trouble to explain. Under the contrary persuasion, I scruple not to serve you with stronger meats than are generally thought fit for popular digestion. I should consult my own ease more, and your advantage less, if I could acquiesce in the general opinion.—For our present subject. The condition of the Samaritans in the article of religious information, was, in con-

sequence of their connexion with the Jews, so different from that of any other people, that we may reasonably separate the two questions concerning their particular faith and the general expectation of the rest of mankind, and consider them as distinct subjects; for the views of the Samaritans might have been just what they were, although the Gentiles had been left (which never was their case) in total darkness. For the present, therefore, I shall postpone the general question concerning the grounds of the general expectation of the Gentiles (which I purpose, however, with God's gracious assistance, at some future season to resume; but, for the present, I shall postpone it), and, confining myself to the particular case of the Samaritans, I shall endeavour to ascertain the particular sources from which they drew their information that the Messiah was to come for the general advantage of mankind, and that he was to come in the character of a public teacher of the true religion. In the first circumstance, their expectation

differed from those of the Jews, and, in the second, from those of the whole Gentile world. Now, since these notions, which were peculiar to themselves, could not be formed on any vague traditions which were current among any other people, and since they have been remarkably justified by the event of things, it is most reasonable to suppose that they were drawn immediately from the word of God—from prophecies of the Old Testament, which the Samaritans interpreted with more discernment than the Jews, because they were free from the prejudices which the Jews entertained in favour of their own nation,—perhaps for this reason, that being secretly conscious of their spurious original, however they might boast their descent from Abraham, they were unwilling to admit those exclusive claims of his family for which the Jews so zealously contended, and on which their fatal prejudices were founded. But if the notions of the Samaritans were drawn immediately from the Old Testament, it is evident they are to be

sought in those parts of it which the Samaritans admitted. The Samaritans admitted no part of the sacred writings of the Jews but the five books of Moses. In the books of Moses, therefore, we are to look for such prophecies of the Messiah as might be a sufficient foundation of the faith of the Samaritans—of that pure faith which was free from the errors of the Jews, and far more particular than the general expectation of the Gentiles. In the books of Moses we must look for prophecies of the Messiah, declaring the general extent of the deliverance he was to accomplish, and describing him in the character of a religious teacher: and these prophecies must be clear and explicit,—not conveyed in dark images and ambiguous allusions, but in terms that might be open to popular apprehension before their accomplishment; for if no such prophecies should be found in the books of Moses, the faith of the Samaritans will be a fact for which it will be impossible to account.

For prophecies describing the Messiah as the general benefactor of mankind, it is no difficult task to find them in the books of Moses. The greater difficulty, perhaps, would be to find any prophecy of him, of that high antiquity, in which the extent of the blessings that should be the consequence of his appearance is not expressly signified. This circumstance is clearly implied in the earliest revelations; and it is remarkable that it is always mentioned in the most explicit terms, in the promises made to the ancestors of the Jewish nation. A general restoration of mankind from the ruin of the fall was plainly implied in the original curse upon the serpent; for what would have been the great victory of the woman's seed, if the greater part of Eve's posterity were doomed to continue in the power of the common enemy?—if, for one family to be brought by Christ within the possibility of salvation, two hundred and ninety-seven millions were to remain the neglected victims of the Devil's malice?—which, upon a very mo-

derate computation, was the case, if Jacob's was the single family that was to have an interest in Christ's redemption. After the flood, when Jehovah was described as the God of Shem, it was declared that Japhet was to find a shelter in Shem's tabernacle. Nor can I perceive that the curse denounced on Canaan's degenerate posterity amounted to an absolute exclusion of his descendants from the knowledge and the worship of Shem's God: the contrary, I think, is mercifully implied in the terms of the curse, though I confess very darkly. When it was first intimated to Abraham that the Messiah was to arise among his descendants, it was at the same time declared that the blessing was to reach to all the families of the earth; and this declaration was constantly repeated upon every renewal of the glorious promise to Isaac and to Jacob: so that the whole tenor of patriarchal prophecy attests the universal extent of the Messiah's blessings; and the thing is so very clear, that it is unnecessary to be more particular in the proof of it.

Again, for the time of his appearance. This was marked in Jacob's dying prophecy by a sign which the Samaritans of our Saviour's days could not but discern. The dissolution of a considerable state hath, like all events, its regular and certain causes, which work the ultimate effect by a slow and gradual progress. The catastrophe is ever preceded by public disorders, of which human sagacity easily forecasts the event. To the Samaritans of our Saviour's day, living in the heart of the Jewish territory, it must have been very perceptible that the sceptre was falling from the hand of Judah, when the Jewish polity was actually within half a century of its dissolution;—and when the sceptre should depart from Judah, then, according to the holy patriarch's prediction, the Shiloh was to come.

Of the extent, therefore, of the Messiah's blessings, and of the time of his appearance, the Samaritans might find clear information in the books of Moses. Upon these points the earliest prophecies were so explicit, that no

higher qualification could be requisite to comprehend their general meaning, than a freedom of the mind from prejudices in favour of the pretensions of the Jewish nation,—prejudices which the Samaritans, who hated the Jews, were not likely to entertain.

It may be somewhat more difficult to produce the particular predictions in which they found the Messiah described as a religious teacher. That predictions to this purpose do exist in the books of Moses, in terms which were clearly understood by the ancient Samaritans, cannot reasonably be doubted; because we find this notion of the Messiah in the previous faith of the Samaritans, of which the books of Moses were the sole foundation. If these prophecies are now not easy to be found, the whole difficulty must arise from the obscurity which time hath brought, through various causes, upon particular passages of these very ancient writings, which originally were perspicuous.

It were, perhaps, not difficult to prove, that the promise which accompanied the delivery of the law at Sinai—the promise of a prophet to be raised up among the Israelites, who should resemble Moses—had the Messiah for its ultimate object: and from the appeal which is repeatedly made to it by the first preachers of Christianity,—from the terms in which the inquiries of the Pharisees were propounded to the Baptist,—from the sentiments which the Jewish multitude were accustomed to express upon occasion of several of our Saviour's miracles, it is very evident, that, in the age of our Lord and his apostles, the Messiah was universally looked for by the Jewish nation, as the person in whom that promise was to receive its final and particular completion. In the office of a prophet, and more particularly in the resemblance of Moses, the character of a teacher is indeed included; but of a national teacher of the Jews only, not of an universal instructor of mankind. This promise, therefore, could hardly be the foundation of the

expectation which the Samaritans entertained of a public teacher who was to rescue the whole world from moral evil, by instructing all men in the true religion: for, in the letter of the prophecy, no such character appears; nor is it probable, that before the merciful scheme of Providence was developed and interpreted by the appearance of our Saviour and the promulgation of the gospel, men would be so quicksighted in the interpretation of dark figures and distant allusions, as to descry the character of an universal teacher under the image of a prophet of the Israelites. The passages, therefore, on which the Samaritans built their hope, we have yet to seek.

One passage which, if I take its meaning right, contains an illustrious prophecy to our purpose, occurs in the book of Deuteronomy. It is the beginning of that prophetic song in which Moses, just before his death, describes the future fortunes of the twelve tribes of Israel. This song is contained in the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, under the

title of "The blessing wherewith Moses the man of God, at the point of death, blessed the children of Israel." The particular passage of which I speak, lies in the second, third, fourth, and fifth verses. From the quick transitions that are used in it from narrative to ejaculation, and from ejaculation again to narrative—and from the mixture of allusion to past facts and future events—it has much of that natural difficulty which is in some degree inseparable from this style of composition: and the natural difficulty of the passage seems considerably heightened by the errors of transcribers; insomuch, that the ablest critics seem to have despaired of reducing the original text to any grammatical propriety, or of drawing from it any consistent meaning, without much liberty of conjectural emendation. If the interpretation which I shall venture to propose should seem new, it will nevertheless be thought a circumstance somewhat in its favour, that, at the same time that it brings the passage to a more interesting and more connected sense than

any other exposition—a sense too the most pertinent to the occasion—it requires fewer alterations of the present text than are necessary in any exposition that hath been hitherto attempted. Of forty-two words, of which the whole passage is composed, six only undergo slight alterations, and a seventh is omitted. The six alterations have the sanction of antiquity,—two from the Samaritan copy of the original text, three from the Greek translation of the Seventy, and the sixth from the Syro-Arabic and Chaldee versions. In the omission of the seventh word, which is the name of Moses in the fourth verse, I have the consent of judicious critics, who have found the omission necessary in all possible interpretations of the passage. In this sacred poem, the particular benedictions of the several tribes are naturally prefaced with a thankful commemoration of that which was the great and general blessing of the whole nation—the revelation which they enjoyed, and the singular privilege of a polity and a law of Divine institution,

The mention of these national prerogatives is mixed with intimations of God's general tenderness for the whole human race, with which the particular promises to the Jews, as hath been before observed, were seldom unaccompanied in the earlier prophecies; and, as I understand the passage, a prediction of the final conversion of the Jews to Christ, after a previous adoption of the Gentiles, finishes the lofty proem of the inspired song. Such, as I conceive it, is the general scope and purport of the passage; of every part of which, with the few alterations I have mentioned, I shall now give you the literal translation,—or, where that cannot be done with perspicuity in the English language, the exact meaning, accompanied with so much of paraphrase and remark as may be necessary to illustrate the connexion, and to justify my version in its principal peculiarities.

The prophet enters upon his subject with poetical allusions to the most striking circum-

stances of the glorious scene which accompanied the promulgation of the law.

"Jehovah came from Sinai;
"His uprising was from Seir:
"He displayed his glory from mount Paran,
"And from the midst of the myriads came forth the Holy One *,—
"On his right hand streams of fire."

Seir and Paran were places in the wilderness where the Divine glory had been sensibly displayed. The myriads, from which the Holy One is described as coming forth, were the myriads of attendant angels whose descent perhaps was visible before the blaze of light burst forth which was the well-known signal of the personal presence of the Holy One,—that High and Holy One whose transcendant perfections and original existence separate him by an infinite interval even from the highest

* "*The Holy One.*" The same word is used for *God*, in the parallel text of Habakkuk.—Editor.

orders of the angelic nature. The streams of fire on his right, are the incessant flashes of lightning which struck the whole assembly with dismay.

The description being brought to this point, the thing next in order to be mentioned should be the utterance of the decalogue; but here the prophet interrupts his narrative, to commemorate God's parental care of all mankind, in these pathetic ejaculations:

"O loving Father of the peoples!"

"Of the peoples,"—that is, of all the different nations of the world; for that is the force of "peoples" in the plural.

"O loving Father of the peoples!

"All the saints are in thy hand;

"They are seated at thy feet,

"And have received of thy doctrine."

"All the saints—good men of all families and of all countries are under thy protection." In our English Bibles we read 'all his saints." It is upon the authority of the Seventy that I throw away the pronoun, which not being

expressed in their translation, had probably no place in their copies of the original; and indeed its whole effect is but to destroy the generality of the expression, on which the spirit of the sentiment entirely depends. "All the saints are seated at thy feet, and have partaken of thy doctrine." In these words, you will observe, the great Being who was styled the loving Father of the peoples is addressed in the specific character of a teacher; for the expression of sitting at his feet describes the attitude of scholars listening to the lessons of a master. "And they have received of thy doctrine, or of thy instruction." "They have received—" In the public translation, the expression is in future time,—"They shall receive;" and, thus rendered, the passage stands as a promise of the instruction of mankind by future revelations: but we have the authority of the Seventy to understand the original expression of the past. The promise of future instruction comes in another place: the allusion here is to past mercies, as an evidence of

the universality of God's parental care of all mankind, in which the prophet professes his belief; and of this the past instances of general mercy, manifested in the revelations which had been granted to good men in the patriarchal ages, long before the institution of the Mosaic covenant, furnished a more pregnant proof than distant promises. After these ejaculations, the prophet resumes his narrative, and proceeds to mention the promulgation of the law; which, prefaced as it is with these allusions to the world's old experience of its Maker's comprehensive love, seems rather alleged as a recent instance of the general providence, than as an argument of any arbitrary partial fondness for that particular race in which the theocracy was erected.

"To us he prescribed a law." "He," the Holy One who came forth from the midst of the myriads; for the intervening ejaculations stand in parentheses, and this line is to be taken in connexion with the two last of the initial stanza.

" To us he prescribed a law.
" Jacob is the inheritance of the preacher:
" He shall be king in Jeshurun,
" When the chiefs of the people shall gather
themselves together
" In union with the tribes of Israel."

" Jacob is the inheritance of the preacher." This sentence renders the reason of the institution of the law,—that the family of Jacob, for the general good of mankind, was chosen to be the inheritance or peculiar portion of the preacher. They were appointed to be for many ages the immediate objects of Divine instruction, and the depositaries of the sacred oracles. In this sense Jacob was the inheritance of "the preacher,"—of that person who hath been in all ages, though in different ways at different seasons, the dispenser of the light of revelation. Of this preacher Jacob is here called the inheritance, in the same sense in which the Jewish nation is called "his own" in the first chapter of St John's gospel. The word which I have rendered by "the preacher"

hath been generally taken in this place in the sense of "congregation," which gives the whole passage a very different meaning: but the sense in which I take it, of "the preacher," is the usual signification of the word. The use of it in the sense of "congregation" is unexampled in the sacred writings, unless perhaps in this passage, in another in the book of Genesis, and a third in the book of Nehemiah. The passage of the book of Genesis will be particularly considered in the prosecution of our subject. The signification of the word in question is not less ambiguous in that place than it is here; and the sense of "the preacher" will equally suit the context. In Nehemiah, the sense is somewhat doubtful; and, were it certain, the style of Nehemiah is not the best standard for the interpretation of Moses. The interval between the two writers was long; and the changes and corruptions which the Hebrew language underwent in the captivity of the Jewish nation were great and various. The book of Ecclesiastes was of an earlier and a

purer age; and throughout that book, the word, by the consent of all interpreters, signifies "the preacher." But the particular advantage of taking the word here in its usual and proper signification, is the remarkable perspicuity which it gives to the ensuing distich, —clearly demonstrating the person of whom it is predicated that he shall be a king; which person it will be no easy matter to ascertain, if, by adopting any other meaning of this word, we lose the description of him which this line affords. "He shall be king." The preacher, whose inheritance is Jacob, shall be king. Our public translation has it—"He was king;" making the sentence an assertion of something past, instead of a prediction. And this assertion some understand of Moses, who was no king, nor ever bore the title,—and some, of God, of whom it were improper to say that he *was* what he *ever is*, king in Jeshurun. With the authority of the Seventy, therefore, on my side, I throw away the letter which gives the verb the preterite form, and understand it of

time future. "He" the preacher, "shall be king in Jeshurun." The word "Jeshurun" is no patronymic of the Jewish nation; but, by the natural force of it, seems rather to denote the whole body of the justified, in all ages of the world, and under all dispensations: and it is to be taken with more or less restriction of its general meaning, according to the particular times which may be the subject of discourse. It is sometimes descriptive of the Jews, not as the natural descendants of Jacob or of Abraham, but in their spiritual character of the justified, while they formed the whole of the acknowledged church: but, in prophecies which respect the adoption of the Gentiles, it denotes the whole body of the faithful gathered from the four winds of heaven. In this Jeshurun the monarchy of *God* was from the beginning, is without interruption, and shall be without end: but the *Messiah's* kingdom commenced upon our Lord's ascension; and its establishment will be then complete, when the rebellious Jews shall acknowledge

him. This kingdom I conceive to be here predicted, in the assertion that the preacher shall be king in that Jeshurun which shall hereafter be composed of Jews and Gentiles, living in friendship and alliance, professing the same faith, and exercising the same worship.

Thus it appears, that in this prophecy of Moses, if we have rightly divined its meaning, the Messiah is explicitly described under the character of a preacher, in whose spiritual kingdom Jews and Gentiles shall be united as the subjects of a common Lord. This interpretation of this remarkable passage will receive, I think, considerable confirmation, from the elucidation of another prophecy of an earlier age, in which Christ's character of a general teacher, or his business at least of teaching all the world, is described in terms less liable to ambiguity of interpretation. And this I shall consider in my next discourse.

SERMON XXVI.

JOHN, iv. 42.

"*We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*"

This fourth chapter of St John's gospel contains a narrative of our Saviour's visit to the town of Sychar in Samaria; and in the text we have the testimony which was publicly borne by the people of the place to the truth of his pretensions.

Extraordinary as the fact may seem, this portion of the evangelical history affords the most unquestionable documents of the truth

of it,—that the Samaritans of our Saviour's day not only believed in a Christ who was to come, but had truer notions than the Jews, their contemporaries, of the nature and extent of the salvation to be expected from him, and of the means by which it should be accomplished: the nature of the salvation, spiritual —the extent, universal—the means, teaching. They expected a deliverance of the whole world from moral evil, by a person who should appear in the character of a universal teacher of the true religion.

Of these just views of the Samaritans, the books of Moses, which were the only part of the Jewish scriptures which the Samaritans received, were the only possible foundation. The conclusion therefore seems infallible, that prophecies do actually exist in some part of the books of Moses, which describe the Messiah as a general teacher of the true religion, and express this character in terms which were clearly understood by the ancient Sama-

ritans. If these prophecies are now not easy to be found, the difficulty must arise from the obscurity which time hath brought upon particular passages of those very ancient writings, which originally were perspicuous. If, by the assistance of Him who hath promised to be ever with us, we should be enabled to succeed in our attempt to do the injuries of time in some degree away, and to restore defaced prophecies of this great importance to their original evidence, we trust we shall have rendered some part of the service which we owe to that great cause to the support of which our talents and our studies stand solemnly devoted.

In my last discourse, I produced a passage from the book of Deuteronomy, which, in whatever obscurity it may have lain for several ages, with fewer and slighter emendations than are requisite to bring it to any other consistent meaning, admits an interpretation which makes it an illustrious prophecy to our purpose. You

will recollect, that the passage is the proem of that prophetic song in which Moses, just before his death, described the fortunes of the twelve tribes of Israel. My translation, which it may be useful to repeat, that the agreement and resemblance between this prophecy and some others which I now purpose to consider may be the more readily perceived,—my translation of the second and three following verses of the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, is in these words.

"Jehovah came from Sinai;
"His uprising was from Seir:
"He displayed his glory from mount Paran,
"And from the midst of the myriads came forth the Holy One,—
"On his right hand streams of fire.
"O loving Father of the peoples!
"All the saints are in thy hand;
"They are seated at thy feet,
"And have received of thy doctrine

" To us he (the Holy One) prescribed a law.
" Jacob is the inheritance of the preacher :
" He (the preacher) shall be king in Jeshurun,
" When the chiefs of the peoples gather themselves together
" In union with the tribes of Israel."

The interpretation of this remarkable passage will receive great confirmation from the elucidation of another prophecy, of an earlier age, which I now take in hand. The examination of this prophecy will consist of two parts. The first point will be, to ascertain its meaning, as it stands in our modern copies of the Hebrew text, without any alteration ; and the second, to consider an emendation suggested by the old versions, which, without altering the sense, considerably improves the perspicuity and heightens the spirit of the expression.

When the patriarch Jacob was setting out for Padan-aram, to form an alliance by mar-

riage, according to the customs of those early times, with the collateral branch of his mother's family, his father Isaac's parting blessing was to this effect: "God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee; and thou shalt be a *multitude of peoples.*" This blessing was repeated, it seems, to the patriarch, in his dream at Luz; for though this circumstance is not mentioned by Moses in its proper place, in his narrative of that extraordinary dream, in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis, it is, however, apparent, by the words which in the forty-eighth chapter he puts into the mouth of Jacob upon his deathbed. "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me—Behold I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee; and I will make of thee a multitude of peoples." You will observe, that it is not without a special reason that I choose in these passages to sacrifice the propriety of my English expression to an exact adherence to the letter of the Hebrew text, in the use of the word

"peoples" in the plural. In the original language of the Old Testament, the word "people" in the singular always signifies some single nation, and, for the most part, the individual nation of the Jews; the plural word "peoples" signifies *many* nations, either Jews and Gentiles promiscuously, or the various nations of the Gentiles, as distinguished from the Jews. Our translators, in this instance over studious of the purity of their English style, have dropped this important distinction throughout the whole of the Old Testament; and thus the force and spirit of the original, wherever it depends upon this distinction, which is the case in many prophetic texts, is unhappily lost in our public translation. But, to return.

This same blessing was again repeated upon the patriarch's return from Padan-aram, when God appeared to him, and said—"I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee." It is the same word in the original which is rendered in our English Bibles, in this third

benediction, by a "company," and in the two former passages by a "multitude:" but it is of great importance to observe, that in the promise made to Abraham that he should be a father "of many nations," or, according to the margin, "of a multitude of nations," a very different word is used. Were the marginal interpretation adopted, the terms of this promise to Abraham, and of the blessings pronounced upon Jacob upon three different occasions, in our English Bibles would be very much the same: whereas in the original they are essentially different; and the difference lies in the principal word, in the word which expresses the matter of the promise. Now, as a sameness of the terms, if it really existed, would be an argument for assigning one and the same meaning to the promises, so a regular variation of the terms in which the promises to Abraham and to his grandson were conveyed, when the promise was repeated twice to Abraham—to Jacob three times, creates a strong presumption that the promises to these different

persons, in which so striking a difference of the terms was so consta tly observed, had different objects: a d the event of things confirms the suspicion. Of Abraham, who was the common ancestor of the Israelites, the Arabians, the Idumæans, and many other nations of the East, it might be said with truth, in the literal sense of the words, "that he should be the father of many nations." But, of Jacob, whose whole posterity was contained in the single nation of the Jews, I cannot see with what propriety it could be said that "a company of nations should come out of *him*," or that *he* should be "made a multitude of peoples." To say that nations or peoples stand only for tribes, is an ill-devised subterfuge of Jewish expositors: it is founded upon a principle which will ever mislead, because it is in itself false (though, by the way, it is the favourite assumption of our modern Socinians, and is the foundation of their whole system), that the prophetic style describes little things by gigantic images. Even in the spiritual sense, the ex-

pression that Jacob should be a multitude of peoples, or that a company of nations should come out of him, would be improper and unprophetic; for the various races of men, who, by embracing the faith of Christ, are become in a spiritual sense the children of Abraham and of Jacob, are in the same spiritual sense, by virtue of their adoption into the blessed family, become parts of the one nation of the spiritual Israel, and are no longer to be called in any spiritual sense a multitude or a company of peoples or of nations. It is a just observation of the learned Calvin, that a prophecy which should have described the Christian community under the image of a variety of nations, would have been no blessing, but a curse; since, according to the regular signification of the prophetic images, which have their regular and determined significations no less than the words of common speech, such a prophecy would have been predictive of factions and schisms, and would have threatened a dissolution of that unity on which the welfare

of the church depends. The word which, in these promises to Jacob, is rendered by "multitude" or "company" in our English Bibles, takes its origin and its meaning from a root which properly signifies "to assemble," or to "call an assembly:" and the force of it in these passages seems more properly expressed in the Greek translation of the Seventy than by any later interpreter. Their translation is to this effect: In the two first places, "I will make thee for the gathering together of nations:" in the third place, "the gathering together of nations shall be from thee;"—and the gathering together which is intended, can be no other than the gathering of all nations into one in Christ. But, if I mistake not, this great event is much more expressly mentioned in these passages than it appears to be even in the version of the Seventy; the Messiah being personally mentioned under the character of the "Gatherer of the nations:" for the word which the Seventy render by "the gathering together," and the English translators by "a

multitude or company," may by its derivation either signify the persons of which an assembly is composed, in which sense our English translators understood it,—or the act of bringing them together, which is the sense the Seventy express; or it may bear a third sense, which perhaps is of all the most pertinent in the passages in question: it may stand for the person by whose authority the assembly is convened. Any one of these three senses, the word, for its natural force, may bear indifferently; and in which of the three it is in any particular passage to be taken, can only be determined by the occasion upon which it is introduced, by what is said of it, and by the words with which it is immediately connected. In the passages in question, the first sense seems absolutely excluded by the truth of history, with which true prophecy must ever be consistent: Jacob never became the father of a multitude of nations. Of the remaining two, we are at liberty to choose that which may be most consistent with history and with the general tenor of the

ancient prophecies, and may give the most importance to the sense and the most spirit to the expression. The spirit of the expression will be the most striking, if the last of the three senses be adopted, that of a person; for, with this sense of the word, the literal rendering of the three passages will be thus: Of the two first, "I have appointed thee for a gatherer of the peoples:" of the third, "A nation and the gatherer of nations shall arise from thee." Were I satisfied that our modern copies of the Hebrew text give these promises to Jacob precisely in the terms in which they were originally delivered to him, without the alteration or omission of a single letter, I might perhaps allege, in confirmation of the interpretation I would propose, that our Lord may be imagined to allude to this prediction of himself under the character of a gatherer of the nations, in those pathetic words with which he closed his public preaching. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou murderess of the prophets! thou that stonest them that are sent unto thee!

how often would I have gathered thy children together in what manner the hen gathereth her own chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" But, whichever be the true rendering,—whether "the gatherer," for which my opinion stands, or "the gathering together," which the Seventy approve,—the prophecy contains an evident allusion either to the person of Christ as a teacher, or to his business as a teaching; for although the ambiguous word, in the sense of an assembly, seems to carry no natural limitation of its meaning, but might stand for any assembly convened by proclamation, without regard to any particular end or purpose for which it might be holden, yet the most frequent use of it among the sacred writers is for assemblies of which the purpose is either civil consultation or religious worship and instruction: and the civil assemblies to which it is applied, are for the most part those in which something of religious business mixes itself more or less with the purpose of the meeting: so that, in the sense of

"an assembly," it pretty much corresponds with the English word "congregation," which by its natural force might stand for any assembly, and yet, by the usage of our best writers, and indeed of common speech, is appropriated to religious assemblies. By analogy, therefore, we may conclude that this same word, in the sense of "an assembler," must peculiarly denote the person who presides in a religious congregation, who leads the public worship, and instructs the people: and the gatherer of nations, in this sense, is the proper character of the founder of a religion which was to be adopted by the whole Gentile world; except, perhaps, that it may seem somewhat more comprehensive, as describing a person who should gather the nations, as our Saviour would have gathered the children of Jerusalem, for the double purpose of teaching and of saving them.

In these passages, therefore, of the book of Genesis, as they stand in our modern copies of the Hebrew text, whether we follow the version

of the Seventy or adopt another which the original words will equally bear, we have an explicit prediction of the instruction and salvation of the Gentiles, to be accomplished by a descendant of Jacob. The two first, indeed, in which it is said to Jacob that he should be, or that God had appointed him to be for a gatherer or for the gathering of the peoples, declare perhaps the general benefit immediately intended by the selection of Jacob's family, who, for the general good of all mankind, were appointed to be for a certain period the depositaries of the true religion, and the objects of a miraculous discipline. Their intercourse, in various ways at different periods—by conquest or by commerce, by alliance or by servitude—with the principal empires and most enlightened nations of the world,—in the earliest times with the Moabites, the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, and the Syrians of Damascus; afterwards with the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians; then with the Greeks; and last of all with the Romans;—the intercourse

of the Israelites, in every period of their state, with the people that was the most considerable for the time, was the means of keeping alive some knowledge of the true God even among the heathens, in such a degree at least as might prepare the world for a general revelation at the appointed season. They were, as some of their own rabbin have very well expressed it, the witnesses of the one true God to all mankind. In this sense Jacob was appointed for the congregations, or for the teacher of the people: his posterity was a race of priests, a nation of prophets. The third passage specifically respects either the general salvation of the Gentiles, or the person who was to save them by teaching them a true religion and a pure worship. According to the version of the Seventy, "The gathering together of the nations shall be from thee," this passage is exactly parallel with our Saviour's own words, in his conference with the Samaritan woman, "Salvation is of the Jews." The salvation of the Gentiles is predicted; and the accomplish-

ment of it is ascribed to a descendant of Jacob. According to the version which to me seems preferable, it is a prophecy describing a descendant of Jacob by the character of the Saviour and the teacher of all mankind.

We find, therefore, in this promise to Jacob, as it is represented in the copies of the Hebrew text which are now in use, such a declaration of God's merciful care of all mankind—so explicit a prediction of a teacher, or at least of a teaching of the Gentiles, as may sufficiently account for the just views which the Samaritans entertained of the nature as well as of the extent of the Messiah's redemption.

I cannot take leave of this same prophecy, without considering an emendation which the translation of the Seventy suggests. The true object of the prophecy is that which appears in the interpretation of the Greek translators—the mysterious scheme of Providence of gathering all nations into one in Christ. But, though the Seventy have so far succeeded as not to misinterpret (for they have expressed the

true purport of the prophecy, and have introduced no false images which the original words do not convey), whether they have had the good fortune to seize the true turn of the original expression, and have given the prophecy in its genuine form as well as its true meaning, will bear a question. In their translation, the prophecy is a simple prediction of the event. The original words will bear an exposition which render it an animated prediction of the person by whom the event was to be accomplished, in that particular character in which we have the highest reason to think he is actually described in some passages of the Mosaic writings which have been long misunderstood. The different interpretations of this passage have all arisen, as I have in a preceding part of this discourse explained, from the the ambiguity of a single word, which by its natural force may indifferently signify either a multitude assembled, the act of assembling, or the person by whose authority the assembly is convened. If the ambiguous word be taken in the last of these

three meanings, the literal rendering of the three passages in question will be to this effect: Of the two first, "Thou shalt be," or "I have appointed thee to be for a gatherer of the peoples:" of the third, "A nation and the gatherer of nations shall arise from thee." I shall not dwell upon the arguments that might be alleged for giving a preference to this interpretation of the passages in question, as the original text stands in our modern copies; but I shall proceed to show, that in older copies, which were likely to be more sincere, this was the most obvious if not the only sense which the Hebrew words presented.

The copies of the Hebrew text which are now in use, from which the English and most modern translations of the Old Testament have been made, give the text which the Jews have thought proper to consider as authentic, since a revision of the sacred books by certain learned rabbin who lived several centuries after Christ. These critics, by their very imperfect knowledge of the Hebrew language, which in their

time had been a dead language among the Jews themselves for many ages, and by their prejudices against our Saviour, were but ill qualified for their arduous undertaking. I would not over confidently charge them with an impiety of which they have been suspected—of wilful corruptions of the prophetic text in prejudice of our Lord's pretensions. To say the truth, I am little inclined to give credit to this heavy accusation: the Jews, to do them justice, with all their prejudices, have ever shown a laudable degree of religious veneration for the sacred text, and have employed the greatest pains, though not always by the most judicious means, to preserve its integrity. I am therefore unwilling to believe that any Jew would make the least wilful alteration in any expression which he believed to have proceeded from the inspired pen. But, although I am inclined to acquit them of the imputation of wilful corruptions (without any impeachment, however, of the candour of those who judge more severely; for they have room enough for

their suspicions), it is but reasonable to suppose,—it were unreasonable to suppose the contrary,—that where various readings occurred of any prophetic text, these Jewish critics would give the preference, not in malice, but in the error of a prejudiced mind,—they would give the preference to that reading which might seem the least favourable to the scheme of Christianity, and to give the least support to the claims of that Saviour whom their ancestors had crucified and slain: and that this was actually their practice, might be proved by many striking instances. It is therefore become of great importance, to consider how certain texts might stand in more ancient copies of the sacred writings; which is often to be discovered from the translations and paraphrases made before the appearance of our Saviour, and of consequence before any prejudices against him could operate. Among these, the Greek translation of the Pentateuch, for its great antiquity, deserves the highest attention; being about two hundred and sixty years older

than the Christian æra. And though an extreme caution should be used in admitting any conjectural emendations of the sacred text, lest we should corrupt what we attempt to amend, yet the historical inquiry after the varieties of the ancient copies cannot be prosecuted with too much freedom: for, though it might be dangerous to make any alteration of the modern text, except upon the most certain evidence, yet it can never be dangerous to know of any particular text that it was once read otherwise; and the inquiry might often prove the means of restoring many illustrious prophecies. Nor can I see for what reason we should be scrupulous to adopt readings which give perspicuity to particular passages, and heighten the prophetic evidence, when we have the highest reason to believe that those readings were received by the Jews themselves, in their unprejudiced times; and were only called in question afterwards, for the positive testimony they seemed to bear to our Saviour's claims, and to the gospel doctrine of a general redemp-

tion. The passages which would be most apt to suffer, through the prejudices of the later Jewish critics, would be those in which the call of the Gentiles was most openly predicted, and in which the Messiah was described as an universal teacher.

We have seen that this description of the Messiah is contained in the promises to Jacob, as they stand in the modern Hebrew text. From an attentive consideration of the Greek translation of the Seventy, I cannot but persuade myself that this character of the Messiah was far more explicitly expressed in the copies of the Hebrew from which that version was made, though it was not clearly understood by those translators; and yet the whole difference between their copies of the original and those of the modern Jews consists in the omission of a single letter in the later copies. The word "gathering," or "gatherer," on the true sense of which so much depends, is rendered by the Seventy, in every one of the three passages in question, in the plural number,—not

"*gathering*," but "*gatherings*;" and yet the original Hebrew word, in the present state of the text, is singular. These translators have in general followed their original with such scrupulous exactness, expressing in their Greek all the grammatical peculiarities of their Hebrew original, often at the expense not only of the purity but of the perspicuity of their style, that no one who has had the opportunity of giving a critical attention to that translation will believe, that the Seventy would in three places, where they found a word in the Hebrew which could not but be singular, choose, without any necessity, to express it by a plural word in Greek: and every one who cannot believe this, will find himself compelled to conclude that that word, which in our modern copies of the Hebrew text is necessarily singular, in the copies which the Seventy used was something that might be taken for a plural The addition of a single letter (and that a letter which transcribers have been very apt to omit) to the word which now occurs in the

Hebrew, will give it that plural form which the Seventy have expressed: but, with the addition of this letter, the Hebrew word may be either that plural word which the Seventy understood it to be, or a singular word which literally signifies "the preacher." "The words of *the preacher*, the son of David, king of Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher." This, you know, is the title and the beginning of the book of Ecclesiastes. The word which here, and in other parts of this same book, is very properly rendered in our English Bibles by "the preacher," differs not in a single letter from that plural word which in the promises to Jacob the Seventy have rendered by "the gatherings." But since this word, by the consent of all interpreters, signifies "the preacher" throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, why should it be otherwise understood in other passages of Scripture, where the same sense may suit the context? In the promises to Jacob, no other sense of the word will equally suit the context, since no other

interpretation of the word produces an equal perspicuity of the whole sentence. This, therefore, is the sense in which it is most reasonable to understand it; and the literal translation of these three passages, as the text appears to have stood in the copies which the Greek translators followed, will be thus: Of the two first, "Thou shalt be," or "I have appointed thee to be for a preacher of the peoples:" of the third, "A nation, and the preacher of nations shall come out of thee." It is no great objection to this interpretation, that the Seventy missed it: these translators were Jews, and would be little inclined to admit a sense of any text which should make it a prediction of the Messiah in the express character of a teacher of the Gentiles. They took up, therefore, with another meaning, which the word, considered by itself, might equally bear, though it rendered the sentence less perspicuous. The want of perspicuity was a circumstance in which they found a shelter for their prejudices. They perhaps imagined, that "the gathering of the

nations," though by the proper import of the Hebrew words it expressed "a gathering of the nation for the purpose of instruction and salvation," was only an obscure prediction of a universal monarchy of the Jews, to be established by the Messiah, and a gathering of the Gentiles under that monarchy by conquest: and an obscure prediction of this exaltation of their own nation was more to their taste than an explicit prophecy of the Messiah as a general benefactor. The Samaritans, who had no interest in the national prosperity of the Jews their enemies, were better interpreters.

To sum up the whole of this long but interesting disquisition, it appears that the promises to Jacob, conveyed first in his father Isaac's parting blessing—repeated in the patriarch's dream at Luz, and, for the last time, when God appeared at Peniel—in any sense in which they can be taken, contain, especially the last of them, a clear prophecy of the Messiah as a universal teacher. The precise terms in which these promises were conveyed, are in

some small degree uncertain; for we find, in the translation of the Seventy, the plainest indications of a small difference, in all the three texts, between their copies and those which are now received. The difference is only of a single letter in the ancient copies, which is not found in those of the present day; and this variety affects not the sense of the promise, but makes some difference in the degree of precision with which the sense is expressed. The terms of the promise, according to the one or the other of these two different readings—according to the ancient or the later copies, are unquestionably correct; and according to either, the general purport is the same: but if the greater correctness lie in the later copies, then the Messiah's character of a teacher of the nations is only to be drawn from the general character of a gatherer, in which it is contained, or his particular business of teaching the nations, from the general business of gathering them. If the ancient copies gave the truer reading, then the Mes-

siah is expressly announced under the specific character of a "preacher of the nations."

In either way, we have found, in these promises in the book of Genesis, of which the Samaritans acknowledged the authority, an explicit prophecy of the Messiah as an universal preacher. Two prophecies, therefore, of this import, seem to be yet legible in the books of Moses; and, by bringing these prophecies to light, we discover a new circumstance of agreement between the character which our Lord sustained and the prophecies that went before concerning him.

I would now turn your attention for a moment to a subject which might well deserve a particular discussion,—the evidence upon which the Samaritans, looking for a Christ to come, were induced to believe that Jesus was the person. What was the evidence which produced this belief?—what is the evidence on which we believe? We are curious to examine the philosophy of the doctrine: we seek for the com-

pletion of prophecies, and for the evidence of miracles: unless we see signs and wonders, we will not believe;—but upon what evidence did the Samaritans believe? We read of no miracles performed among the Sycharites. That we read of none is not a proof that none were performed: but if any were, it was not evidence of that kind which took possession of the hearts of the Samaritans;—they allege our Saviour's doctrine as the ground of their conviction; and our Saviour's doctrine carries with it such internal evidence,—it is in itself so rational and consistent—in its consequences so conducive to that which must be the great end of a Divine revelation, if any such be extant,—it discovers a scheme of salvation so wonderfully adapted both to the perfections of God and the infirmities of man, that a mind which hath not lost, by the force of vitious habits, its natural sense of right and wrong—its natural approbation of what is good and great and amiable, will always perceive the Christian doctrine to be that which cannot easily be dis

believed when it is fairly propounded. The Samaritans heard this doctrine from the Divine teacher's mouth for the short space of two days: we, in the writings of the evangelists, have a complete summary of his triennial preaching; we have, joined with the detail of many of his miracles, the delineation of his character, and the history of his wonderful life of piety and love: we have seen the fortitude with which he repelled temptation—the patience with which he endured reproach—the resignation with which he underwent the punishment of others' crimes: in the figured language of the apostle, we ourselves have heard him preach,—we have seen him crucified,—we have seen him rise again: we experience his present power, in the providential preservation of his church and support of his doctrine. The Samaritans were convinced by a preaching of two days; how, then, shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!

SERMON XXVII.

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 15.

"*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*"

THE obscurity of this text arises from two causes,—from a double sense of the word "minded," and from an improper use of the word "otherwise."

The word "minded" predicates indifferently any state of mind,—this or that particular state, according as the occasion upon which it is used, and the words with which it is connected, may limit and qualify its general mean

ing. A state of the mind may be either a state of its dispositions and affections towards external objects,—a state of its hopes and fears —its desires and aversions—its schemes, purposes, and machinations; or a state of the intellect with respect to its internal faculties—the quickness of the apprehension—the strength of the memory—the extent of knowledge, and the truth or error of opinion. The condition of a man's mind with respect to these or any other circumstances of its appetites—its native powers or acquired endowments, may be expressed in our language by his being thus or thus minded. By this great latitude of its signification, the English word "minded" serves to convey the meaning of a great variety of words in the original languages of the holy Scriptures. In this particular text, however, it is one and the same word in the original which answers in both parts of the sentence to the word "minded:" and this original word might seem, by its nature and derivation, to be capable of the same variety of meaning as the

English; but, by the usage of the sacred writers, its signification, so far as it corresponds at all with the English word "minded," is far more restrained; for it is never applied to the intellectual part of the mind, but with respect to the opinions,—nor to the disposition, but in a religious sense, to express the state of moral taste and sentiment. It carries, however, a double meaning, seeing it may express a state of mind with respect either to opinion or religious disposition. It is used in these two different senses in the different branches of the text; and this double application of the same word, in different clauses of the same sentence, makes the whole difficulty of the passage as it lies in the original.

But, in our English translation, this difficulty is greatly heightened by the improper use of the word "otherwise," which in our language is a word of comparison between individual things, insomuch that it can never be used with propriety unless it is answered by the comparative "than" either expressed

or understood; and the expression "to be otherwise minded," in the English language, properly signifies to be in a state of mind other than some certain state afterwards mentioned or already described. In the text, I doubt not but the generality of the readers of the English Bibles imagine an opposition is intended between "*thus* minded" and "*otherwise* minded," and would perhaps supply the sentence thus: "Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing you be otherwise minded than thus, God shall reveal even this unto you." This, at least, seems to be the exposition to which the English expressions naturally lead us; but this exposition will lead us far away from any thing that may be supposed to be a wise man's meaning.

Now, the original word which is here rendered "otherwise," is frequently indeed used, like the English word, to indicate comparison; yet, in its primary and most proper meaning, in which I think it is to be taken here, it predicates generally, without reference to indivi-

dual terms of comparison, the opposite of sameness or uniformity,—that is, difference or variety; and it might perhaps be better rendered by the English word "variously." We will take the liberty, therefore, to substitute "variously" in the place of otherwise" in the text; and, bearing in remembrance the double meaning of the word "minded," let us see what sense the passage, thus corrected, will present. "Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing you be variously minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Light seems to open on the passage: the opposition which before perplexed us between "thus minded" and "otherwise minded" now disappears. The deficiency of the sentence is in another part than we at first suspected, and is to be very differently supplied. "Let us, as many as are perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be variously minded, God shall reveal to you even this *thing concerning which you have various minds.*" I doubt not but you now perceive

that the exhortation to be "thus minded" respects certain virtuous habits of the mind—certain sentiments with respect to religious practice, which the apostle would recommend it to the Philippians to assume: and the supposition of their being variously minded, regards certain differences of opinion which he apprehended might subsist among them when this epistle was written, and which, he assures them, the good habits he prescribes, were they once become universal, would in a great measure abolish, by that especial blessing of God's overruling providence and enlightening Spirit which ever accompanies the upright and sincere.

The disposition or habit of the mind which the apostle recommends, is that which in the verses immediately preceding the text he has described as his own,—namely, such a constant and earnest desire of continual improvement in the habits of a Christian life, as made him think lightly of any proficiency he had actually made in it, otherwise than as a necessary step

towards farther attainments. Having expressed his high sense of the importance of the Christian doctrine, and the merit of that righteousness which consists in the exercise of Christian duties, and arises from a true and lively faith in Christ, he declares, in the tenth and eleventh verses, that he is content to be conformed to his Master's death,—that is, to suffer and to die, as he did, for the good of mankind, and for the interests of the true religion, if by any means he might "attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not," says he, "that I have yet gotten hold,—not that I am secure of attaining the great prize to which I aspire, or am already perfect,—but I persevere in the pursuit, if, by my utmost diligence, I may at last lay hold of it: for which purpose,—that I might persevere in this great pursuit, and at last lay hold upon the prize, hold has been taken of me by Jesus Christ." There is in the original, a certain animated play (not unusual in the most serious discourse, nor abating any thing of its seriousness, but adding to

its force) upon the double meaning of the word "lay hold." A person lays hold upon a thing, when he takes possession of it, and claims it as his right and property. In this sense, the apostle speaks with much diffidence and humility of his hope of laying hold of his reward. A guide lays hold of a person that is going out of his way, to lead him into it, or of a feeble person, to support him. In this sense the apostle speaks of Christ's laying hold on him, to conduct him into the path of life, and to support him in it; at the same time, not without some oblique allusion to the miraculous manner of his first conversion, under the image of a sudden and violent seizure. The apostle goes on. "Brethren, I do not so account of myself as if I had already gotten hold;—zealous as I have been in the propagation of the faith,—patient as I am under all the sufferings in which it has involved me;—prepared as I am to sacrifice my life in its support, yet I do not entertain the arrogant opinion, that, by these services or

these dispositions, I have already earned my reward. I pretend to no merit beyond this one thing, that, forgetting what is behind,—thinking little of attainments already made,—I stretch forwards to what is yet before, endeavouring at continual improvement. I make towards the goal, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This is my mind: these are my notions of our duty: these are my views of our perfection; and let us all, as many as be perfect,—as many as pretend to perfection, or would aspire after it,—be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be variously minded,—if in certain points of doctrine, or concerning some particulars of external worship, you are not all agreed, provided you are sincere in the desire, and constant in the endeavour to improve, God will enlighten your understandings, and bring you, by a general apprehension of the truth, to agree no less in your opinions than in the general principles of life." The apostle goes on, in the following verse. "Be that as it may, so

far as we have already attained, walk by the same rule; have your minds upon the same thing." This is the exact rendering of the sixteenth verse. The words "let us," which occur twice in the English translation,—"let us walk by the same rule," and "let us mind the same thing,"—the words "let us" are in both places an addition of the translators, and darken the meaning. "But, whatever differences of opinion may remain among you," says the apostle, "in that which I for my part consider as the only perfection to which I have yet attained, agree in following my example: walk by the same rule by which I walk, of neglecting the things that are behind, and making for the goal; have your minds upon the same thing which my mind is set upon—a continual progress and improvement."

Thus I have opened to you what I conceive to be the true meaning of the text. Indeed, it is the only one that can be drawn without violence from the words, and is the best suited to the purport of the apostle's discourse: and,

among a great variety of expositions that have been proposed, there is but one other that seems to deserve the least attention,—which is that of those who, in the expression "thus minded," refer the word "thus" to the opinion which the apostle expresses in the beginning of this chapter, concerning the ceremonies of the Mosaic law,—that they make no part of a Christian's duty; and the difference of opinion expressed in the words "otherwise minded," they understand of a difference of opinion between the apostle himself and some members of the church to which he writes, upon that particular question concerning the importance of the Jewish ceremonies: and thus they bring the sense of the text to nothing more than a declaration concerning those who might stand for the obligation of the ceremonial law under the Christian dispensation,—that God would, at some time or other, open their minds to perceive the error of this particular opinion. As this exposition has been pretty much received, and has found its way into some of the best

English paraphrases of this epistle, it may be proper briefly to mention our reasons for rejecting it. One great objection to this interpretation is, that it turns the text into a very singular promise of illumination, upon a particular question, to all who should dissent from the apostle's doctrines, without the stipulation of any condition which might render them in any degree worthy of such extraordinary favour. It is far more reasonable to understand the promise of a general illumination of the mind upon religious subjects, limited to those who, under much darkness and imbecility of understanding, should distinguish themselves by a sincerity of good intention. But an objection of still greater weight than this is, that by the evident connexion of the text with the following verse this exposition is clearly set aside. Read the two verses, the fifteenth and sixteenth, in connexion, and you will easily decide whether the sum of the admonition, according to this view of the passage, is such as the apostle can be supposed to give. "Let

us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded with respect to the rites of the Jewish religion, that under the Christian establishment they are of no importance towards salvation; and if any of you think otherwise about them, God will, at some time or other, bring you to a better mind. But, be that as it may,—whether you are brought to that better mind or no, as far as we have attained, walk by the same rule." By what same rule? Why, according to this exposition, by the rule of neglecting the Jewish ordinances. "Have this same mind." What same mind? That which it has been just supposed they might not have,—the opinion that the ritual part of the Jewish religion is superseded by the gospel. He that would stand for this interpretation of the text, let him find another instance, in the apostle's writings, where the apostle enjoins an hypocritical assent to opinions which the understanding has not received, or requires of any man to walk by a rule which has not the entire approbation of his conscience.

I have thought proper to examine this exposition more particularly than I should otherwise have done, because I find it is much received, and has found its way into some of the best English paraphrases of this epistle. But, having shown you that it brings the text to a meaning little consistent with the general sense and spirit of the gospel, I shall think it needless to dwell upon the farther confutation of it. Some other expositions are to be found among the Latin fathers, which all rest upon a corruption of some ancient copies of the Latin version. Of the two which the genuine text of the apostle may bear, that which I adopt is what the words in their natural meaning most obviously present, and the only one that the context will admit. We may therefore safely rest in this as the true exposition of the apostle's meaning: and I shall accordingly proceed to set before you the important lessons which the text, in this view of it, suggests; which are these two. First, it teaches us in what the true per-

fection of the Christian character consists; and, secondly, what the immediate advantages to the Christian community would be, if that good habit of the mind which constitutes perfection were once become universal; which would be nothing less than this,—that all differences of opinion (at least all contentious disagreement, the great bane of Christian love and harmony) would be abolished, by God's blessing on the natural operation of this happy temper; and Christians would be established in that universal peace and charity which is so generally professed and preached, and is so little practised.

First, the text teaches us in what the perfection of the Christian character consists,—namely, in an earnest desire and steady pursuit of perpetual improvement. This, at least, the apostle declares, was the highest attainment he himself could boast: and what was the height of the apostle's virtue may well be allowed to be the perfection of every private Christian, especially as it is in this circum-

stance that he proposes himself as an example to all who would be perfect. "Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Perhaps you will imagine, that if this be perfection, it is an attainment easily made, or rather, that it is a quality of which none are destitute, since all men have more or less of a desire of being better than they feel themselves to be. But that desire of improvement in which the apostle places his own and every Christian's perfection, is not a desire terminated in the mind itself, unproductive of any real effort to improve. This is so little the perfection of a Christian, that it seems to be only a necessary part of the human character in its utmost state of depravation: it is the necessary result of that natural perception of right and wrong of which the worst of men are never totally divested. He that should be divested of it would from that moment cease to be a man; he would cease to be a moral agent, inasmuch as, having lost all natural sense of the moral quality of his actions, he would to all intents and pur-

poses, with respect to moral good and evil, be irrational: he would have lost the faculty of reasoning upon that subject, and could no longer be accountable for the violation of rules which he would no longer understand. These perceptions, therefore, from which our whole capacity of being good or bad arises, must be of the nature of man, if man by his nature be a moral agent: and the difference between good men and bad is not that the latter do really lose the perceptions which the other retain, but that, retaining the same original perceptions, they lose the benefit of them in the conduct of their lives, turning the attention, by a voluntary effort of the mind, to other objects. These perceptions being of the nature of man, it is of the nature of man, even of wicked men, to approve virtue and to disapprove its opposite: and from a natural desire of being in friendship with himself, the wicked man, when he reflects upon his own character, and perceives that it is destitute of those qualities which might naturally claim

his own respect and love, cannot but wish that he were the opposite of what he is,—respectable rather than contemptible—amiable rather than odious. Hence it is, that nothing is more common than for persons of the most debauched and abandoned lives, to acknowledge that they are not what they ought to be; and to express a wish that they were better,—at the same time that they speak upon a subject of such great concern, with a tranquillity and coolness that shows that nothing is farther from their thoughts than the purpose of making any vigorous efforts towards their own reformation. These wishes are not insincere; but they are involuntary, resulting, by a natural necessity, from that constitution of the human mind which is indeed its perfection, considered as the work of God, but is no more a part of the moral virtue of the man, considered as a free agent, than any other of his natural endowments,—the strength of his memory, for instance, or the quickness of his apprehension, or even than the exterior comeliness of his person, his muscular

strength, or the agility of his limbs. In all these natural gifts and faculties, among which conscience is the first in worth and dignity, there is reason to admire the good and perfect work of God: but it is in the application of them, by the effort of the will, to God's service, to the good of mankind, and to self-improvement, that we are to seek the true perfection of the *human* character. The bare unprevailing wish that we were what we necessarily understand we ought to be, hath nothing more in it of moral merit than the involuntary assent of the mind to any other self-evident truth. In the epistle to the Romans, St Paul, describing the condition of the mind in its most corrupt and ruined state, when reason is become the slave of appetite, and the prohibitions of God's pure and holy law serve only to irritate the passions which they ought to controul,—in this ruined condition of the mind, St Paul supposes that the natural sense of what is right remains, accompanied with an ineffectual desire of performing it: and it is not to

be supposed that he speaks of that quality here as the perfection of a Christian, which there he attributes to the reprobate. That desire of improvement which makes the perfect Christian, the apostle describes in himself as an active principle, maintaining the ascendant in his heart over every other appetite, and displaying its energy in the whole tenor of his life. He describes it as derived from a conviction of the understanding that the proper business of this life is to prepare for the next. The formal nature of it he places in this,—that its immediate object is rather virtue itself than any exterior prosperity of condition with which virtue may be rewarded: for he compares his thirst of virtuous attainments to the passion that stimulated the competitors in the Grecian games; and he describes the reward which the Christian seeks under the image of the prize to be bestowed on him that should be foremost in the race. The passion which fires the competitors in any honourable contest is a laudable ambition to excel; and the prize is no other-

wise valued than as the mark and seal of victory. Of that reward which is the object of the Christian's hope, it were madness to affirm that it has not an intrinsic value; for we are taught that it will consist in a state of perfect happiness: but that happiness is therefore perfect, because it is the condition of a nature brought to perfect holiness; and that desire of improvement in which the apostle places our perfection hath for its immediate object those virtuous attainments which insure the reward, rather than the reward itself, otherwise considered than as the honourable distinction of the approved servants of God. It is easy to perceive that this thirst for moral excellency must be in its nature what the apostle in himself experienced—a principle of growing energy; for, wherever this principle is sincere, as long as any degree of imperfection remains, or, to speak more accurately, as long as any farther excellence is attainable, farther improvement must be the object. The true Christian, therefore, never can rest in any ha-

bits of virtue already attained: his present proficiency he values only as a capacity of better attainments; and, like the great Roman whose appetite of conquest was inflamed by every new advantage gained, he thinks nothing done while aught remains which prowess may achieve.

Such is the principle, as may be collected from the apostle's description of his own feelings and his own practice,—such is the principle in which he places the perfection of a Christian; in its origin rational, in its object disinterested, in its energies boundless: and in these three properties its perfective quality consists. And this I would endeavour more distinctly to prove: but, for this purpose, it will be necessary to explain what man's proper goodness naturally is, and to consider man both in his first state of natural innocence, and in his present state of redemption from the ruin of his fall. But this is a large subject, which we shall treat in a separate discourse.

SERMON XXVIII.

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 15.

"*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*"

THE perfection of the Christian character, as may be collected from the apostle's description of his own feelings and his own practice, consists, it seems, in an earnest desire of perpetual progress and improvement in the practical habits of a good and holy life. When the apostle speaks of this as the highest of his own attainments, he speaks of it as the governing principle of his whole life; and the perfective quality that he ascribes to it seems to

consist in these three properties,—that it is boundless in its energy, disinterested in its object, and yet rational in its origin. That these are the properties which make this desire of proficiency truly perfective of the Christian character, I shall now attempt to prove; and, for this purpose, it will be necessary to inquire what man's proper goodness is, and to take a view of man, both in his first state of natural innocence, and in his actual state of redemption from the ruin of his fall.

Absolute perfection in moral goodness, no less than in knowledge and power, belongs incommunicably to God; for this reason, that goodness in the Deity only is original: in the creature, to whatever degree it may be carried, it is derived. If man hath a just discernment of what is good, to whatever degree of quickness it may be improved, it is originally founded on certain first principles of intuitive knowledge which the created mind receives from God. If he hath the will to perform it, it is the consequence of a connexion which the Creator

hath established between the decisions of the judgment and the effort of the will; and for this truth of judgment and this rectitude of the original bias of the will, in whatever perfection he may possess them as natural endowments, he deserves no praise, any otherwise than as a statue or a picture may deserve praise, in which what is really praised is not the marble nor the canvass—not the elegance of the figure nor the richness of the colouring, but the invention and execution of the artist. This, however, properly considered, is no imperfection in man, seeing it belongs by necessity to the condition of a creature. The thing made can be originally nothing but what the maker makes it: therefore the created mind can have no original knowledge but what the Maker hath infused—no original propensities but such as are the necessary result of the established harmony and order of its faculties. A creature, therefore, in whatever degree of excellence it be supposed to be created, cannot originally have any merit of its own; for merit

must arise from voluntary actions; and cannot be a natural endowment: and it is owing to a wonderful contrivance of the beneficent Creator, in the fabric of the rational mind, that created beings are capable of attaining to any thing of moral excellence—that they are capable of becoming what the Maker of them may love, and their own understandings approve. The contrivance that I speak of consists in a principle of which we have large experience in ourselves, and may with good reason suppose it to subsist in every intelligent being, except the First and Sovereign intellect. It is a principle which it is in every man's power to turn, if he be so pleased, to his own advantage: but if he fail to do this, it is not in his power to hinder that the deceiving spirit turn it not to his detriment. In its own nature it is indifferent to the interests of virtue or of vice, being no propensity of the mind to one thing or to another, but simply this property,—that whatever action, either good or bad, hath been done once, is done a second time with more ease and

with a better liking; and a frequent repetition heightens the ease and pleasure of the performance without limit. By virtue of this property of the mind, the having done any thing once becomes a motive to the doing of it again: the having done it twice is a double motive; and, so many times as the act is repeated, so many times the motive to the doing of it once more is multiplied. To this principle, habit owes its wonderful force; of which it is usual to hear men complain, as of something external that enslaves the will. But the complaint, in this, as in every instance in which man presumes to arraign the ways of Providence, is rash and unreasonable. The fault is in man himself, if a principle implanted in him for his good becomes by negligence and mismanagement the instrument of his ruin. It is owing to this principle that every faculty of the understanding and every sentiment of the heart is capable of being improved by exercise. It is the leading principle in the whole system of the human constitution,

modifying both the physical qualities of the body and the moral and intellectual endowments of the mind. We experience the use of it in every calling and condition of life. By this the sinews of the labourer are hardened for toil: by this the hand of the mechanic acquires its dexterity: to this we owe the amazing progress of the human mind in the politer arts and the abstruser sciences. And it is an engine which it is in our power to employ to nobler and more beneficial purposes. By the same principle, when the attention is turned to moral and religious subjects, the understanding may gradually advance beyond any limit that may be assigned, in quickness of perception and truth of judgment; and the will's alacrity to conform to the dictates of conscience and the decrees of reason will be gradually heightened, to correspond in some due proportion with the growth of intellect. "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that so regardest him! Thou hast made him lower than the angels, to crown

him with glory and honour!" Destitute as he is of any original perfection, which is thy sole prerogative, who art alone in all thy qualities original, yet in the faculties of which thou hast given him the free command and use, and in the power of habit which thou hast planted in the principles of his system, thou hast given him the capacity of infinite attainments. Weak and poor in his beginnings, what is the height of any creature's virtue, to which he has not the power, by a slow and gradual ascent, to reach? The improvements which he shall make by the vigorous exertion of the powers he hath received from thee, thou permittest him to call his own, imputing to him the merit of the acquisitions which thou hast given him the ability to make. What, then, is the consummation of man's goodness, but to co-operate with the benevolent purpose of his Maker, by forming the habit of his mind to a constant ambition of improvement, which, enlarging its appetite in proportion to the acquisitions already

made, may correspond with the increase of his capacities, in every stage of a progressive virtue, in every period of an endless existence? And to what purpose but to excite this noble thirst of virtuous proficiency,—to what purpose but to provide that the object of the appetite may never be exhausted by gradual attainment, hast thou imparted to thy creature's mind the idea of thine own attribute of perfect uncreated goodness?

But man, alas! hath abused thy gifts; and the things that should have been for his peace are become to him an occasion of falling. Unmindful of the height of glory to which he might attain, he has set his affections upon earthly things. The first command, which was imposed that he might form himself to the useful habit of implicit obedience to his Maker's will, a slight temptation—the fair show and fragrance of the forbidden fruit, moved him to transgress. From that fatal hour, error hath seized his understanding, appetite

perverts his will, and the power of habit, intended for the infinite exaltation of his nature, operates to his ruin.

Man hath been false to himself; but his Maker's love hath not forsaken him. By early promises of mercy, by Moses and the prophets, and at last by his Son, God calls his fallen creature to repentance. He hath provided an atonement for past guilt. He promises the effectual aids of his Holy Spirit, to counteract the power of perverted habit, to restore light to the darkened understanding, to tame the fury of inflamed appetite, to purify the soiled imagination, and to foil the grand Deceiver in every new attempt. He calls us to use our best diligence to improve under these advantages; and it is promised to the faithful and sincere, that by the perpetual operation of the Holy Spirit on their minds, and by an alteration which at the general resurrection shall take place in the constitution of the body, they shall be promoted to a degree of perfection, which, by the strength that naturally remains

in man in his corrupted state, they never could attain. They shall be raised above the power of temptation, and placed in a condition of happiness not inferior to that which by God's original appointment might have corresponded with the improvement of their moral state, had that improvement been their own attainment, by a gradual progress from the first state of innocence. That the devout and well-disposed are thus by God's power made perfect, is the free gift of God in Christ—the effect of undeserved mercy, exercised in consideration of Christ's intercession and atonement. Thus it is that fallen man is in Christ Jesus "created anew unto those good works which God had before ordained that we should walk in them." His lost capacity of improvement is restored, and the great career of virtue is again before him. What, then, is the perfection of man, in this state of redemption, but that which might have been Adam's perfection in paradise?—a desire of moral improvement, duly proportioned to his natural capacity of improving; and, for

that purpose, expanding without limit, as he rises in the knowledge of what is good, and gathers strength in the practical habits of it.

Thus, you see, the proper goodness of man consists in gradual improvement: and the desire of improvement, to be truly perfective of his character, and to keep pace with the growth of his moral capacities, must be boundless in its energies, or capable of an infinite enlargement.

Another property requisite in this desire of improvement, to give it its perfective quality, is that it should be disinterested. Virtue must be desired for its own sake,—not as subservient to any farther end, or as the means of any greater good. It has been thought an objection to the morality of the Christian system, that as it teaches men to shun vice on account of impending punishments, and to cultivate virtuous habits in the hope of annexed rewards, that therefore the virtue which it affects to teach it teaches not, teaching it upon mean and selfish motives. The objection perhaps

may claim a hearing, because it is founded on principles which the true Christian will of all men be the last to controvert,—namely, that good actions, if they arise from any other motive than the pure love of doing good, or, which is the same thing, from the pure desire of pleasing God, lose all pretension to intrinsic worth and merit. God himself is good, by the complacency which his perfect nature finds in exertions of power to the purposes of goodness; and men are no otherwise good than as they delight in virtuous actions from the bare apprehension that they are good, without any selfish views to advantageous consequences. He that denies these principles confounds the distinct ideas of the useful and the fair, and leaves nothing remaining of genuine virtue but an empty name. But our answer to the adversary is, that these are the principles of Christianity itself; for St Paul himself places the perfection of the Christian character in that quality of disinterested virtue which some have injuriously supposed cannot belong to it. It

may seem, perhaps, that the strictness and purity of the precepts of Christianity rather heighten the objection than remove it; that the objection, rightly understood, is this,—that the Christian system is at variance with itself, its precepts exacting a perfection of which the belief of its doctrines must necessarily preclude the attainment; for how is it possible that a love of virtue and religion should be disinterested, which, in its most improved state, is confessedly accompanied with the expectation of an infinite reward? A little attention to the nature of the Christian's hope—to the extent of his knowledge of the reward he seeks, will solve this difficulty. It will appear, that the Christian's desire of that happiness which the gospel promises to the virtuous in a future life,—that the desire of this happiness, and the pure love of virtue for its own sake, paradoxical as the assertion may at first seem, are inseparably connected: for the truth is, that the Christian's love of virtue does not arise from a previous desire of the reward; but his desire of

the reward arises from a previous love of virtue. Observe that I do not speak of any love of virtue previous to his conversion to Christianity: but I affirm that the first and immediate effect of his conversion is to inspire him him with the genuine love of virtue and religion; and that his desire of the reward is a secondary and subordinate effect—a consequence of the love of virtue previously formed in him: for, of the nature of the reward it promises, what does the gospel discover to us more than this,—that it shall be great and endless, and adapted to the intellectual endowments and moral qualities of the human soul in a state of high improvement?—and, from this general view of it, as the proper condition of the virtuous, it becomes the object of the Christian's desire and his hope. "It doth not yet appear," saith St John, "what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear (*i. e.* when Christ shall appear) we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Thus, you see, is our hope,—to be made like to Christ our Saviour,

in the blessed day of his appearance: and "he that hath this hope in him"—this general hope of being transformed into the likenss of his glorified Lord, of whose glory, which, as he hath not seen, he hath no distinct and adequate conception—"purifies himself, as he is pure." Of the particular enjoyments in which his future happiness will consist, the Christian is ignorant. The gospel describes them by images only and allusions, which lead only to this general notion, that they will be such as to give entire satisfaction to all desires of a virtuous soul. Our opinion of their value is founded on a sense of the excellence of virtue, and on faith in God as the protector of the virtuous. The Christian gives a preference to that particular kind of happiness to which a life of virtue and religion leads, in the general persuasion, that of all possible happiness *that* must be the greatest which so good a being as God hath annexed to so excellent a thing in the creature as the shadow of his own perfections. But the mind, to be susceptible of

this persuasion, must be previously possessed with an esteem and love of virtue, and with just apprehensions of God's perfections: and the desire of the reward can never divest the mind of that disinterested love of God and goodness on which it is itself founded; nor can it assume the relation of a cause to that of which it is itself the effect. It appears, therefore, that the Christian's love of goodness—his desire of virtuous attainments, is, in the strict and literal meaning of the word, disinterested, notwithstanding the magnitude of the reward which is the object of his hope. The magnitude of that reward is an object of faith, not of sense or knowledge; and it is commended to his faith, by his just sense of the importance of the attainments to which it is promised.

If any one imagines he can be actuated by principles more disinterested than these, he forgets that he is a man and not a god. Happiness must be a constant object of desire and pursuit to every intelligent being,—that is, to every being, who, besides the actual perception

of present pleasure and present pain, hath the power of forming general ideas of happiness and misery as distinct states arising from different causes. Every being that hath this degree of intelligence is under the government of final causes; and the advancement of his own happiness, if it be not already entire and secure, must be an end. It is impossible, therefore, that any rational agent, unless she be either sufficient to his own happiness, which is the prerogative of God, or hath some certain assurance that his condition will not be altered for the worse, which will hereafter be the glorious privilege of the saints who overcome,—but without this prerogative or this privilege, it is impossible that any rational being should be altogether unconcerned about the consequences of his moral conduct, as they may affect his own condition In the present life, the advantages are not on the side of virtue: all comes alike to all—"to him that sacrificeth and him that sacrificeth not—to him that sweareth and to him that feareth an oath:" and if a con-

stitution of things were to continue for ever in which virtue should labour under disadvantages, man might still have the virtue to regret that virtue was not made for *him*; but discretion must be his ruling principle; and discretion, in this state of things, could propose no end but immediate pleasure and present interest. The gospel, extending our views to a future period of existence, delivers the believer from the uneasy apprehension that interest and duty may possibly be at variance. It delivers him from that distrust of Providence, which the present face of things, without some certain prospect of futurity, would be too apt to create; and sets him at liberty to pursue virtue, with all that ardour of affection which its native worth may claim, and gratitude to God his Maker and Redeemer may excite.

It is true, the alternative which the gospel holds out is endless happiness in heaven or endless suffering in hell; and the view of this alternative may well be supposed to operate to a certain degree on base and sordid minds,—

on those who, without any sense of virtue, or any preference of its proper enjoyments as naturally the greatest good, make no other choice of heaven than as the least of two great evils. To be deprived of sensual gratifications, they hold to be an evil of no moderate size, to which they must submit in heaven; but yet they conceive of this absence of pleasure as more tolerable than positive torment, which they justly apprehend those who are excluded from heaven must undergo in the place of punishment. On minds thus depraved, the view of the alternative of endless happiness or endless misery was intended to operate; and it is an argument of God's wonderful mercy, that he has been pleased to display such prospects of futurity as may affect the human mind in its most corrupt and hardened state,—that men in this unworthy state, in this state of enmity with God, are yet the objects of his care and pity, —that "he willeth not the death of a sinner, but that the sinner should turn from his way and live." But, to imagine that any one whom the

warnings of the gospel may no otherwise affect than with the dread of the punishment of sin,—that any one in whom they may work only a reluctant choice of heaven as eligible only in comparison with a state of torment, does, merely in those feelings, or by a certain pusillanimity in vice, which is the most those feelings can affect, satisfy the duties of the Christian calling,—to imagine this, is a strange misconception of the whole scheme of Christianity. The utmost good to be expected from the principle of fear is that it may induce a state of mind in which better principles may take effect. It may bring the sinner to besitate between self-denial here with heaven in reversion, and gratification here with future sufferings. In this state of ambiguity, the mind deliberates: while the mind deliberates, appetite and passion intermit: while they intermit, conscience and reason energize. Conscience conceives the idea of the moral good: reason contemplates the new and lovely image with delight; she becomes the willing pupil of religion; she learns to discern in each

created thing the print of sovereign goodness, and in the attributes of God descries its first and perfect form. New views and new desires occupy the soul. Virtue is understood to be the resemblance of God: his resemblance is coveted, as the highest attainment: heaven is desired, as the condition of those who resemble him; and the intoxicating cup of pleasure is refused,—not that the mortal palate might not find it sweet, but because vice presents it. When the habit of the mind is formed to these views and these sentiments, then, and not before, the Christian character, in the judgment of St Paul, is perfect; and the perfective quality of this disposition of the mind lies principally in this circumstance, that it is a disinterested love of virtue and religion as the chief object. The disposition is not the less valuable nor the less good, when it is once formed, because it is the last stage of a gradual progress of the mind which may too often perhaps begin in nothing better than a sense of guilt and a just fear of punishment. The

sweetness of the ripened fruit is not the less delicious for the austerity of its cruder state: nor is this Christian righteousness to be despised, if, amid the various temptations of the world, a sense of the danger, as well as the turpitude of a life of sin, should be necessary not only to its beginning but to its permanency. The whole of our present life is but the childhood of our existence: and children are not to be trained to the wisdom and virtues of men without more or less of a compulsive discipline; at the same time that perfection must be confessed to consist in that pure love of God and of his law which casteth out fear.

We have now seen, that the perfective quality which the apostle ascribes to the Christian's desire of improvement consists much in these two properties,—that it is boundless in its energies, and disinterested in its object. A third renders it complete; which is this,—that this appetite of the mind (for such it may be called, although insatiable, and, in the strictest sense of the word, disinterested) is nevertheless

rational; inasmuch as its origin is entirely in the understanding, and personal good, though not its object, is rendered by the appointment of Providence, and by the promises of the gospel, its certain consequence. Upon the whole, it appears that the perfection of the Christian character, as it is described by the apostle, consists in that which is the natural perfection of the man,—in a principle which brings every thought and desire of the mind into an entire subjection to the will of God, rendering a religious course of life a matter of choice no less than of duty and interest.

SERMON XXIX.

DANIEL, iv. 17.

"*This matter is by the decree of the Watchers, and the demand by the word of the Holy Ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.*" *

THE matter which the text refers to the "decree of the Watchers," and "the demand of the Holy Ones," is the judgment which, after no long time, was about to fall upon Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of whom we read

* Preached in the Cathedral Church of St Asaph, on Thursday December 5, 1805; being the day of public thanksgiving for the victory obtained by Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, over the combined fleets of France and Spain, off Cape Trafalgar.

so much in history, sacred and profane. His conquest of the Jewish nation, though a great event in the history of the church, was but a small part of this prince's story. The kingdom of Babylon came to him by inheritance from his father. Upon his accession, he made himself master of all the rest of the Assyrian empire; and to these vast dominions he added, by a long series of wars of unparalleled success, the whole of that immense track of country which extends from the banks of the Euphrates westward to the sea-coasts of Palestine and Phœnicia and the border of Egypt. Nor was he more renowned in war than justly admired in peace, for public works of the highest utility and magnificence. To him the famous city of Babylon owed whatever it possessed of strength, of beauty, or convenience,—its solid walls with their hundred gates, immense in circuit, height, and thickness—its stately temple and its proud palace, with the hanging gardens —its regular streets and spacious squares—the embankments, which confined the river—the

canals, which carried off the floods—and the vast reservoir, which in seasons of drought (for to the vicissitudes of immoderate rains and drought the climate was liable) supplied the city and the adjacent country with water. In a word, for the extent of his dominion, and the great revenues it supplied—for his unrivalled success in war—for the magnificence and splendour of his court—and for his stupendous works and improvements at Babylon, he was the greatest monarch, not only of his own times, but incomparably the greatest the world had ever seen, without exception even of those whose names are remembered as the first civilizers of mankind—the Egyptian Sesostris and the Indian Bacchus. But great as this prince's talents and endowments must have been, his uninterrupted and unexampled prosperity was too much for the digestion of his mind. His heart grew vain in the contemplation of his grandeur: he forgot that he was a man; and he affected divine honours. His impious pride received indeed a check, by the

miraculous deliverance of the three faithful Jews from the furnace to which they had been condemned. His mind at first was much affected by the miracle; but the impression in time wore off, and the intoxication of power and prosperity returned upon him. God was therefore pleased to humble him, and to make him an example to the world and to himself, of the frailty of all human power—the instability of all human greatness. I say, an example to the world and to *himself*; for it is very remarkable, that the king's own conversion was in part an object of the judgment inflicted upon him: and, notwithstanding what has been said to the contrary, upon no ground at all, by a foreign commentator of great name, it is evident, from the sacred history, that object was accomplished; and it was in order to the accomplishment of it that the king had warning of the impending visitation in a dream. That a dispensation of judgment should be tempered with such signal mercy to a heathen prince, not, like Cyrus, eminent for his vir-

tues, however distinguished by his talents, is perhaps in some degree to be put to the account of the favour he showed to many of the Jews his captives, and in particular to his constant patronage of the prophet Daniel. At a time when there was nothing in his situation to fill his mind with gloomy thoughts, "for he was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace," he saw in a dream a tree strong and flourishing: its summit pierced the clouds, and its branches overshadowed the whole extent of his vast dominions: it was laden with fruit, and luxuriant in its foliage: the cattle reposed in its shade, and the fowls of the air lodged in its branches; and multitudes partook of its delicious fruit. But the king saw a celestial being, a Watcher and a Holy One, come down from heaven; and heard him give order with a loud voice, that the tree should be hewn down, its branches lopped off, and its fruit scattered, and nothing left of it but "the stump of its roots in the earth," which

was to be secured, however, with a "band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field." Words of menace follow, which are applicable only to a man, and plainly show that the whole vision was typical of some dreadful calamity, to fall for a time, but for a time only, on some one of the sons of men.

The interpretation of this dream was beyond the skill of all the wise men of the kingdom. Daniel was called, who, by the interpretation of a former dream, which had been too hard for the Chaldeans and the Magi, and for the professed diviners of all denominations, had acquired great credit and favour with the king; and before this time had been promoted to the highest offices in the state, and, amongst others, to that of president of the college of the Magi. Daniel told the king, that the tree which he had seen so strong and flourishing was himself,—that the hewing down of the tree was a dreadful calamity that should befal him, and continue till he should be

brought to know "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

Strange as it must seem, notwithstanding Daniel's weight and credit with the king—notwithstanding the consternation of mind into which the dream had thrown him, this warning had no permanent effect. He was not cured of his overweening pride and vanity, till he was overtaken by the threatened judgment. "At the end of twelve months, he was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon,"—probably on the flat roof of the building, or perhaps on one of the highest terraces of the hanging gardens, where the whole city would lie in prospect before him; and he said, in the exultation of his heart, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the seat of empire, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" The words had scarcely passed his lips, when "the might of his power and the honour of his majesty" departed from him. The same voice which in

the dream had predicted the judgment now denounced the impending execution; and the voice had no sooner ceased to speak than the thing was done.

This is "the matter,"—this judgment, thus predicted and thus executed, is the matter which the text refers to "the decree of the Watchers" and "the word of the Holy Ones." "The matter is by the decree of the Watchers, and the requisition is by the word of the Holy Ones;" and the intent of the matter is to give mankind a proof, in the fall and restoration of this mighty monarch, that the fortunes of kings and empires are in the hand of God,—that his providence perpetually interposes in the affairs of men, distributing crowns and sceptres, always for the good of the faithful primarily, ultimately of his whole creation, but according to his will.

To apprehend rightly how the judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar, originating, as it is represented in the text, in the "decree of the Watchers, and in the word of the Holy Ones,"

affords an instance of the immediate interference of God's providence in the affairs of men, it is very necessary that the text should be better than it generally has been hitherto understood: and the text never can be rightly understood, until we ascertain *who* they are, and to *what class of beings* they belong, who are called "the Watchers" and "the Holy Ones;" for, according as these terms are differently expounded, the text will lead to very different, indeed to opposite conclusions, —to true conclusions, if these terms are rightly understood—to most false and dangerous conclusions, if they are ill interpreted.

I am ashamed to say, that if you consult very pious and very learned commentators, justly esteemed for their illustrations of the Bible generally, you will be told these "Watchers" and "Holy Ones" are angels,—principal angels, of a very high order, they are pleased to say, such as are in constant attendance upon the throne of God. And so much skill have some of these good and learned

men affected in the heraldry of angels, that they pretend to distinguish the different rank of the different denominations. The "Watchers," they say, are of the highest rank; the "Holy Ones," very high in rank, but inferior to the "Watchers:" and the angels are introduced upon this occasion, they say, in allusion to the proceedings of earthly princes, who publish their decrees with the advice of their chief ministers.

This interpretation of these words is founded upon a notion which got ground in the Christian church many ages since, and unfortunately is not yet exploded; namely, that God's government of this lower world is carried on by the administration of the holy angels,—that the different orders (and those who broached this doctrine could tell us exactly how many orders there are, and how many angels in each order) —that the different orders have their different departments in government assigned to them: some, constantly attending in the presence of God, form his cabinet council; others are his

provincial governors; every kingdom in the world having its appointed guardian angel, to whose management it is intrusted: others again are supposed to have the charge and custody of individuals. This system is in truth nothing better than the Pagan polytheism, somewhat disguised and qualified; for, in the Pagan system, every nation had its tutelar deity, all subordinate to Jupiter, the sire of gods and men. Some of those prodigies of ignorance and folly, the rabbin of the Jews who lived since the dispersion of the nation, thought all would be well if for tutelar deities they substituted tutelar angels. From this substitution the system which I have described arose; and from the Jews, the Christians, with other fooleries, adopted it. But, by whatever name these deputy gods be called,—whether you call them gods, or demigods, or daemons, or genii, or heroes, or angels,—the difference is only in the name; the thing in substance is the same: they still are deputies, invested with a subordinate, indeed, but with an high autho-

rity, in the exercise of which they are much at liberty, and at their own discretion. If this opinion were true, it would be difficult to show that the heathen were much to blame in the worship which they rendered to them. The officers of any great king are entitled to homage and respect in proportion to the authority committed to them; and the grant of the power is a legal title to such respect. These officers, therefore, of the greatest of kings, will be entitled to the greatest reverence; and as the governor of a distant province will, in many cases, be more an object of awe and veneration to the inhabitants than the monarch himself, with whom they have no immediate connexion, so the tutelar deity or angel will, with those who are put under him, supersede the Lord of all: and the heathen, who worshipped those who were supposed to have the power over them, were certainly more consistent with themselves than they who acknowledging the power withhold the worship.

So nearly allied to idolatry—or rather so much the same thing with polytheism, is this notion of the administration of God's government by the authority of angels. And surely it is strange, that, in this age of light and learning, Protestant divines should be heard to say that "this doctrine seems to be countenanced by several passages of Scripture."

That the holy angels are often employed by God, in his government of this sublunary world, is indeed clearly to be proved by holy writ: that they have powers over the matter of the universe, analogous to the powers over it which men possess, greater in extent, but still limited, is a thing which might reasonably be supposed, if it were not declared; but it seems to be confirmed by many passages of holy writ, from which it seems also evident that they are occasionally, for certain specific purposes, commissioned to exercise those powers to a prescribed extent. That the evil angels possessed before their fall the like powers, which they are still occasionally permitted to

exercise for the punishment of wicked nations, seems also evident. That they have a power over the human sensory (which is part of the material universe), which they are occasionally permitted to exercise, by means of which they may inflict diseases, suggest evil thoughts, and be the instruments of temptations, must also be admitted. But all this amounts not to any thing of a discretional authority placed in the hands of tutelar angels, or to an authority to advise the Lord God with respect to the measures of his government. Confidently I deny that a single text is to be found in holy writ, which, rightly understood, gives the least countenance to the abominable doctrine of such a participation of the holy angels in God's government of the world.

In what manner, then, it may be asked, are the holy angels made at all subservient to the purposes of God's government?—This question is answered by St Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, in the last verse of the first chapter: and this is the only passage in the whole

Bible in which we have any thing explicit upon the office and employment of angels. "Are they not all," saith he, "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?" They are all, however high in rank and order,—they are all nothing more than "ministering spirits," or literally "serving spirits;" not invested with authority of their own, but "sent forth"—occasionally sent forth to do such service as may be required of them, "for them that shall be heirs of salvation." This text is the conclusion of the comparison which the apostle institutes between the Son of God and the holy angels, in order to prove the great superiority in rank and nature of the Son: and the most that can be made of angels is, that they are servants, occasionally employed by the Most High God to do his errands for the elect.

An accurate discussion of all the passages of Scripture which have been supposed to favour the contrary opinion, would much exceed

the just limits of this discourse: I shall only say of them generally, that they are all abused texts, wrested to a sense which never would have been dreamed of in any one of them, had not the opinion of the government of angels previously taken hold of the minds of too many of the learned. In the consideration of particular texts so misinterpreted, I shall confine myself to such as occur in the prophet Daniel, from whose writings this monstrous doctrine has been supposed to have received great support; and of these I shall consider my text last of all.

In the prophet Daniel, we read of the angel Gabriel by name, who, together with others unnamed, is employed to exhibit visions typical of future events to the prophet, and to expound them to him: but there is nothing in this employment of Gabriel and his associates which has the most remote connexion with the supposed office of guardian angels either of nations and states or of individuals.

We read of another personage superior to Gabriel, who is named Michael. This personage is superior to Gabriel, for he comes to help him in the greatest difficulties; and Gabriel, the servant of the Most High God, declares that this Michael is the only supporter he has. This is well to be noted. Gabriel, one of God's ministering spirits, sent forth, as such spirits are used to be, to minister for the elect people of God, has no supporter in this business but Michael. This great personage has been long distinguished in our calendars by the title of "Michael the archangel." It has been for a long time a fashion in the church to speak very frequently and familiarly of archangels, as if they were an order of beings with which we are perfectly well acquainted. Some say there are seven of them. Upon what solid ground that assertion stands, I know not: but this I know, that the word "archangel" is not to be found in any one passage of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the word occurs twice, and only

twice. One of the two passages is in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, where the apostle, among the circumstances of the pomp of our Lord's descent from heaven to the final judgment, mentions "the voice of the archangel." The other passage is in the epistle of St Jude, where the title of archangel is coupled with the name of Michael. "Michael the archangel." This passage is so remarkably obscure, that I shall not attempt to draw any conclusion from it but this, which manifestly follows, be the particular sense of the passage what it may: since this is one of two texts in which alone the word "archangel" is found in the whole Bible,—since in this one text only the title of archangel is coupled with any name,—and since the name with which it is here coupled is Michael, it follows undeniably that the archangel Michael is the only archangel of whom we know any thing from holy writ. It cannot be proved from holy writ,—and if not from holy writ, it cannot be proved at all, that any archangel exists but the

one archangel Michael; and this one archangel Michael is unquestionably the Michael of the book of Daniel.

I must observe, by the way, with respect to the import of the title of archangel, that the word, by its etymology, clearly implies a superiority of rank and authority in the person to whom it is applied. It implies a command over angels; and this is all that the word of necessity implies. But it follows not, by any sound rule of argument, that because no other superiority than that of rank and authority is implied in the title, no other belongs to the person distinguished by the title, and that he is in all other respects a mere angel. Since we admit various orders of intelligent beings, it is evident that a being highly above the angelic order may command angels.

To ascertain, if we can, to what order of beings the archangel Michael may belong, let us see how he is described by the prophet Daniel, who never describes him by that title; and what action is attributed to him in the

book of Daniel, and in another book, in which he bears a very principal part.

Now Daniel calls him "one of the chief princes," or "one of the capital princes," or "one of the princes that are at the head of all:" for this I maintain to be the full, and not more than the full import of the Hebrew words. Now, since we are clearly got above the earth, into the order of celestials, who are the princes that are *first*, or *at the head of all?*—are they any other than the Three Persons in the Godhead? Michael therefore is one of them; but which of them? This is not left in doubt. Gabriel, speaking of him to Daniel, calls him "Michael *your* prince," and "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people;" that is, not for the nation of the Jews in particular, but for the children, the spiritual children of that holy seed the elect people of God,—a description which applies particularly to the Son of God, and to no one else. And in perfect consistence with this description of Michael in the book

of Daniel, is the action assigned to him in the Apocalypse, in which we find him fighting with the Old Serpent, the deceiver of the world, and victorious in the combat. That combat who was to maintain,—in that combat who was to be victorious, but the seed of the woman? From all this it is evident, that Michael is a name for our Lord himself, in his particular character of the champion of his faithful people, against the violence of the apostate faction and the wiles of the Devil. In this point I have the good fortune to have a host of the learned on my side; and the thing will be farther evident from what is yet to come.

We have as yet had but poor success in our search for guardian angels, or for angels of the cabinet, in the book of Daniel; but there are a sort of persons mentioned in it whom we have not yet considered,—namely, those who are called "the princes of Persia and of Græcia." As these princes personally oppose the angel Gabriel, and Michael his supporter,

I can hardly agree with those who have taken them for princes in the literal acceptation of the word;—that is, for men reigning in those countries. But if that interpretation could be established, these princes would not be angels of any sort; and my present argument would have no concern with them. If they are beings of the angelic order, they must be evil angels; for good angels would not oppose and resist the great prince Michael, and his angel Gabriel. If they were evil angels, they could not be tutelar angels of Persia and of Græcia respectively, or of any other country. But, to come directly to the point: since they fight with Michael, to those who are conversant with the prophetic style, and have observed the uniformity of its images, it will seem highly probable that the angels which fight with Michael in the book of Daniel are of the same sort with those who fight with Michael, under the banners of the Devil, in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse. "There was war in heaven, Michael and his angels

fought with the Dragon; and the Dragon fought and his angels." The vision of the war in heaven, in the Apocalypse, represents the vehement struggles between Christianity and the old idolatry in the first ages of the gospel. The angels of the two opposite armies represent two opposite parties in the Roman state, at the time which the vision more particularly regards. Michael's angels are the party which espoused the side of the Christian religion, the friends of which had for many years been numerous, and became very powerful under Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor: the Dragon's angels are the party which endeavoured to support the old idolatry. And, in conformity with this imagery of the Apocalypse, the princes of Persia, in the book of Daniel, are to be understood, I think, of a party in the Persian state which opposed the return of the captive Jews, first after the death of Cyrus, and again after the death of Darius Hystaspes. And the prince of Græcia is to be understood of a party in the Greek empire

which persecuted the Jewish religion after the death of Alexander the Great, particularly in the Greek kingdom of Syria.

We have now considered all the angels and supposed angels of the book of Daniel, except the personages in my text; and we have found as yet no tutelar angel of any province or kingdom—no member of any celestial senate or privy council. Indeed, with respect to the latter notion of angels of the presence, although it has often been assumed in exposition of some passages in Daniel, the confirmation of it has never been attempted, to the best of my recollection, by reference to that book. Its advocates have chiefly relied on Micaiah's vision, related in the twenty-second chapter of the first book of Kings; in which, they say, Jehovah is represented as sitting in *council* with his angels, and *advising* with them upon measures. But, if you read the account of this vision in the Bible, you will find that this is not an accurate recital of it. "Micaiah saw Jehovah *sitting* on his throne, and all the

host of heaven *standing* by him, on his right hand and on his left." Observe, the heavenly host are not in the attitude of counsellors, *sitting*; they are *standing*, in the attitude of servants, ready to receive commands, and to be sent forth each upon his proper errand. "And Jehovah said—Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?" Here is no consultation: no advice is asked or given. The only question asked is—Who, of the whole multitude assembled, will undertake a particular service? The answers were various. "Some spake on this manner, and some on that;" none, as it should seem, showing any readiness for the business, till one, more forward than the rest, presented himself before the throne, and said—"I will persuade him." He is asked, by way of trial of his qualifications, "How?" He gives a satisfactory answer; and, being both ready for the business and found equal to it, is sent forth. If this can be called a consultation, it is certainly no such consultation as a great monarch holds

with his prime ministers, but such as a military commander might hold with privates in the ranks.

Having thus disposed, I think, of all the passages in the book of Daniel which mention beings of the angelic or of a superior order, except my text, I can now proceed to the exposition of that, upon very safe and certain grounds.

Among those who understand the titles of "Watchers" and "Holy Ones" of angelic beings, it is not quite agreed whether they are angels of the cabinet, or the provincial governors—the tutelar angels, to whom these appellations belong. The majority, I think, are for the former. But it is agreed by all, that they must be principal angels—angels of the highest orders; which, if they are angels at all, must certainly be supposed: for it is to be observed, that it is not the mere execution of the judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar, but the decree itself, which is ascribed to them. The whole matter originated in their decree;

and at their command the decree was executed. "The Holy Ones" are not said to hew down the tree, but to give command for the hewing of it down. Of how high order, indeed, must these "Watchers and Holy Ones" have been, on whose decrees the judgments of God himself are founded, and by whom the warrant for the execution is finally issued? It is surprising, that such men as Calvin among the Protestants of the Continent*—such as Wells and the elder Lowth in our own church—and such as Calmet in the church of Rome, should not have their eyes open to the error and impiety indeed of such an exposition as this, which makes them angels; especially when the learned Grotius, in the extraordinary manner in

* Calvin, indeed, seems to have had some apprehension that this exposition (which however he adopted) makes too much of angels, and to have been embarrassed with the difficulty. He has recourse to an admirable expedient to get over it. He says the whole vision was accommodated to the capacity of a heathen king, who had but a confined knowledge of God, and could not distinguish between him and the angels.

which he recommends it, had set forth its merits, as it should seem, in the true light, when he says that it represents God as acting like a great monarch "upon a decree of his senate,"—and when another of the most learned of its advocates imagines something might pass in the celestial senate bearing some analogy to the forms of legislation used in the assemblies of the people at Rome, in the times of the republic. It might have been expected that the exposition would have needed no other confutation, in the judgment of men of piety and sober minds, than this fair statement of its principles by its ablest advocates.

The plain truth is, and some learned men, though but few, have seen it, that these appellations, "Watchers" and "Holy Ones," denote the Persons in the Godhead; the first describing them by the vigilance of their universal providence,—the second, by the transcendant sanctity of their nature. The word rendered "Holy Ones" is so applied in other texts of Scripture, which make the sense of

the other word coupled with it here indisputable. In perfect consistency with this exposition, and with no other, we find, in the twenty-fourth verse, that this decree of the "Watchers" and the "Holy Ones" is the decree of the Most High God: and in a verse preceding my text, God, who in regard to the plurality of the persons, is afterwards described by these two plural nouns, "Watchers" and "Holy Ones," is, in regard to the unity of the essence, described by the same nouns in the singular number, "Watcher" and "Holy One." And this is a fuller confirmation of the truth of this exposition: for God is the only being to whom the same name in the singular and in the plural may be indiscriminately applied; and this change from the one number to the other, without any thing in the principles of language to account for it, is frequent, in speaking of God, in the Hebrew tongue, but unexampled in the case of any other being.

The assertion, therefore, in my text is, that God had decreed to execute a signal judgement upon Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and impiety, in order to prove, by the example of that mighty monarch, that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." To make the declaration the more solemn and striking, the terms in which it is conceived distinctly express that consent and concurrence of all the persons in the Trinity in the design and execution of this judgement, which must be understood indeed in every act of the Godhead. And in truth, we shall not find in history a more awful example and monument of Providence than the vicissitudes of Nebuchadnezzar's life afford.

Raised gradually to the pinnacle of power and human glory, by a long train of those brilliant actions and successes which man is too apt to ascribe entirely to himself (the proximate causes being indeed in himself and in the instruments he uses, although Providence is

always the prime efficient), he was suddenly cast down from it, and, after a time, as suddenly restored, without any natural or human means. His humiliation was not the effect of any reverse of fortune, of any public disaster, or any mismanagement of the affairs of his empire. At the expiration of a twelvemonth from his dream, the king, still at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace, surveying his city, and exulting in the monuments of his own greatness which it presented to his eye, was smitten by an invisible hand. As the event stood unconnected with any known natural cause, it must have been beyond the ken of any foresight short of the Divine; and it follows incontestibly, that the prediction and the accomplishment of it were both from God. The king's restoration to power and grandeur had also been predicted; and this took place at the predicted time, independently of any natural cause, and without the use of any human means. And the evidence of these extraordinary occurrences—of the prediction,

the fall, and the restoration—is perhaps the most undeniable of any thing that rests upon mere human testimony. The king himself, upon his recovery, published a manifesto in every part of his vast empire, giving an account of all which had befallen him, and in conclusion giving praise and honour to the King of heaven; acknowledging that "all his works are truth, and his ways judgment, and that those who walk in pride he is able to abase." The evidence of the whole fact, therefore, stands upon this public record of the Babylonian empire, which is preserved *verbatim* in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel, of which it makes indeed the whole. That chapter therefore is not Daniel's writing, but Nebuchadnezzar's.

Nothing can so much fortify the minds of the faithful against all alarm and consternation,—nothing so much maintain them in an unruffled composure of mind, amid all the tumults and concussions of the world around them, as a deep conviction of the truth of the

principle inculcated in my text, and confirmed by the acknowledgment of the royal penitent Nebuchadnezzar, "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." But as this doctrine, so full of consolation to the godly, is liable to be perverted and abused by that sort of men who wrest the Scriptures to the destruction of themselves and others,—notwithstanding that my discourse has already run to a greater length than I intended, the present occasion demands of me to open the doctrine in some points more fully, and to apply it to the actual circumstances of the world and of ourselves.

It is the express assertion of the text, and the language indeed of all the Scriptures, that God governs the world according to his will;—by which we must understand a will perfectly independent, and unbiassed by any thing external; yet not an arbitrary will, but a will directed by the governing perfections of the Divine intellect—by God's own goodness and wisdom; and as justice is included in the idea

of goodness, it must be a will governed by God's justice. But God's justice, in its present dispensations, is a justice accommodated to our probationary state,—a justice which, making the ultimate happiness of those who shall finally be brought by the probationary discipline to love and fear God, its end, regards the sum-total and ultimate issue of things —not the comparative deserts of men at the present moment. To us, therefore, who see the present moment only, the government of the world will appear upon many occasions not conformable, in our judgments, formed upon limited and narrow views of things, to the maxims of distributive justice. We see power and prosperity not at all proportioned to merit; for "the Most High, who ruleth in the kingdom of men, giveth it to whomsoever *he will*, and setteth up over it the basest of men,"—men base by the turpitude of their wicked lives, more than by the obscurity of their original condition; while good kings are divested of their hereditary dominions, de-

throned, and murdered: insomuch, that if power and prosperity were sure marks of the favour of God for those by whom they are possessed, the observation of the poet, impious as it seems, would too often be verified;

"The conqueror is Heaven's favourite; but on earth,
Just men approve and honour more the vanquish'd."*

as at this moment the world beholds with wonder and dismay the low-born usurper of a great monarch's throne, raised, by the hand of Providence unquestionably, to an eminence of power and grandeur enjoyed by none since the subversion of the Roman empire;—a man whose undaunted spirit and success in enterprise might throw a lustre over the meanest birth, while the profligacy of his private and the crimes of his public life would disgrace the noblest. When we see the imperial diadem circling this monster's brows,—while we confess the hand of God in his elevation, let us

* "Victrix causa Diis placuit; sed victa Catoni."

not be tempted to conclude from this, or other similar examples, that He who ruleth in the kingdom of men delights in such characters, or that he is even indifferent to the virtues and to the vices of men. It is not for his own sake that such a man is raised from the dung-hill on which he sprang, but for the good of God's faithful servants, who are the objects of his constant care and love even at the time when they are suffering under the tyrant's cruelty: for who can doubt that the seven brethren and their mother were the objects of God's love, and their persecutor Antiochus Epiphanes of his hate? But such persons are raised up and permitted to indulge their ferocious passions, their ambition, their cruelty, and their revenge, as the instruments of God's judgments for the reformation of his people; and when that purpose is answered, vengeance is executed upon them for their own crimes. Thus it was with the Syrian we have just mentioned, and with that more ancient persecutor Sennacherib, and many more; and

so, we trust, it shall be with him who now "smiteth the people in his wrath, and ruleth the nations in his anger." When the nations of Europe shall break off their sins by righteousness, the Corsican "shall be persecuted with the fury of our avenging God, and none shall hinder."

Again, if the thought that God ruleth the affairs of the world according to his will were always present to the minds of men, they would never be cast down beyond measure by any successes of an enemy, nor be unduly elated with their own. The will of God is a cause ever blended with and overruling other causes, of which it is impossible from any thing past to calculate the future operation: what is called the fortune of war, by this unseen and mysterious cause may be reversed in a moment.

Hence again it follows, that men, persuaded upon good grounds of the justice of their cause, should not be discouraged even by great failures in the beginning of the contest, nor by

sudden turns of ill fortune in the progress of it. Upon such occasions, they should humble themselves before God, confess their sins, and deprecate his judgments: but they should not interpret every advantage gained by the enemy as a sign that the sentence of God is gone forth against themselves, and that they are already fallen not to rise again. When the tribe of Benjamin refused to give up "the children of Belial which were in Gibeah" to the just resentment of their countrymen, the other tribes confederated, and with a great force made war upon them. The cause of the confederates was just. The war, on their part, was sanctioned by the voice of God himself; and it was in the counsel and decree of God that they should be ultimately victorious: yet, upon the attack of the town, they were twice repulsed, with great slaughter. But they were not driven to despair: they assembled themselves before the house of God, and wept, and fasted. They received command to go out again the third day. They obeyed. They were victo-

rious. Gibeah was burned to the ground, and the guilty tribe of Benjamin was all but extirpated;—an edifying example to all nations to put their trust in God in the most unpromising circumstances.

Again, a firm belief in God's providence, overruling the fortunes of men and nations, will moderate our excessive admiration of the virtues and talents of men, and particularly of the great achievements of bad men, which are always erroneously ascribed to their own high endowments. Great virtues and great talents being indeed the gifts of God, those on whom they are conferred are justly entitled to respect and honour: but the Giver is not to be forgotten,—the centre and source of all perfection, to whom thanks and praise are primarily due even for those benefits which are conveyed to us through his highly favoured servants. But when the brilliant successes of bad men are ascribed to themselves, and they are admired for those very actions in which they are the most criminal, it is a most dan-

gerous error, and often fatal to the interests of mankind; as, in these very times, nothing has so much conduced to establish the power of the Corsican and multiply his successes, as the slavish fear of him which has seized the minds of men, growing out of an admiration of his boldness in enterprise on some occasions and his hairbreadth escapes on others, which have raised in the many an opinion that he possesses such abilites, both in council and in the field, as render him an overmatch for all the statesmen and all the warriors of Europe, insomuch that nothing can stand before him: whereas, in truth, it were easy to find causes of his extraordinary success in the political principles of the times in which he first arose, independent of any uncommon talents of his own,—principally in the revolutionary phrenzy, the spirit of treason and revolt, which prevailed in the countries that were the first prey of his unprincipled ambition. But, were this not the case, yet were it impious to ascribe such a man's successes to himself. It has been the

will of God to set up over the kingdom "the basest of men," in order to chastise the profaneness, the irreligion, the lukewarmness, the profligacy, the turbulent seditious spirit of the times; and when this purpose is effected, and the wrath of God appeased, "wherein is this man to be accounted of, whose breath is in his nostrils?"

It is a gross perversion of the doctrine of Providence, when any argument is drawn from it for the indifference of all human actions in the sight of God, and the insignificance of all human efforts. Since every thing is settled by Providence according to God's own will, to what avail, it is said, is the interference of man? At the commencement of the disordered state which still subsists in Europe, when apprehensions were expressed by many (apprehensions which are still entertained by those who first expressed them), that the great Antichrist is likely to arise out of the French revolution, it was argued by them who were friends to the cause of France—"To what purpose is

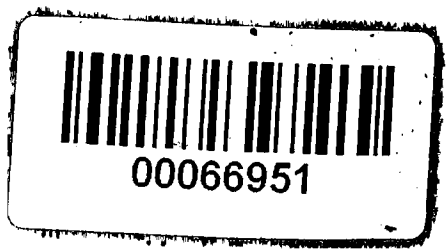
it then, upon your own principles, to resist the French? Antichrist *is* to arise,—he *is* to prevail,—he *is* to exercise a wide dominion; and what human opposition can set aside the fixed designs of Providence?" Strange to tell, this argument took with many who were not friends to the French cause, so far at least as to make them averse to the war with France. The fallacy of the argument lies in this, that it considers Providence by halves; it considers Providence as ordaining an end and effecting it without the use or the appointment at least of means: whereas the true notion of Providence is, that God ordains the means with the end; and the means which he employs are for the most part natural causes; and among them he makes men, acting without any knowledge of his secret will, from their own views as free agents, the instruments of his purpose. In the case of Antichrist, in particular, prophecy is explicit. So clearly as it is foretold that he shall rise, so clearly is it foretold that he shall fall: so clearly as it is foretold that

he shall raise himself to power by successful war, so clearly it is foretold that war—fierce and furious war, waged upon him by the faithful, shall be in part the means of his downfal. So false is all the despicable cant of puritans about the unlawfulness of war. And, with respect to the present crisis, if the will of God should be, that for the punishment of our sins the enemy should prevail against us, we must humble ourselves under the dreadful visitation: but if, as we hope and trust, it is the will of God that the vile Corsican shall never set his foot upon our shores, the loyalty and valour of the country are, we trust, the appointed means of his exclusion. "Be of good courage, then, and play the men for your people; and the Lord do that which seemeth him good."

It is particularly necessary at this season that I should warn you against another gross and dangerous perversion of the doctrine of Providence, which is misconceived and abused when we impute any successes with which we may be blessed to any merit of our own en-

gaging on our side that will of God by which the universe is governed. If we are successful in our contest with a tyrant who has surpassed in crime all former examples of depravity in an exalted station, we owe it not to ourselves, but to God's unmerited mercy. Nor are we to ascribe it to any pre-eminent righteousness of this nation, in comparison with others, if we have suffered less and prospered more than others engaged in the same quarrel. This country, since the beginning of Europe's troubles to the present day, has certainly been favoured beyond other nations: and at this very crisis,—at the moment when the armies of our continental ally were flying before those of the common enemy,—in that very moment, the combined fleets of France and Spain, which were to have lowered the British flag, to have wrested from us our ancient sovereignty of the ocean, and to have extinguished our commerce in all its branches,—this proud naval armament, encountered by a far inferior force of British ships—a force inferior in every thing

but the intrepidity of our seamen and the skill of their leaders—was dashed to pieces, at the mouth of its own harbour, by the cannon of that great commander whose grave is strewed with laurels and bedewed with his country's tears. But let not this inspire the vain thought, that, because we are righteous above all the nations of Europe, our lot has therefore been happier than their's. It has been ruled by the highest authority, that they are not always the greatest sinners on whom the greatest evils fall. The converse follows most undeniably, that those nations are not always the most righteous who in peace are the most flourishing and in war the most successful. Let us give therefore the whole glory to God. In the hour of defeat, let us say—"Why should man complain?—man, for the punishment of his sins;" in the hour of victory—"Let us not be high-minded, but fear."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